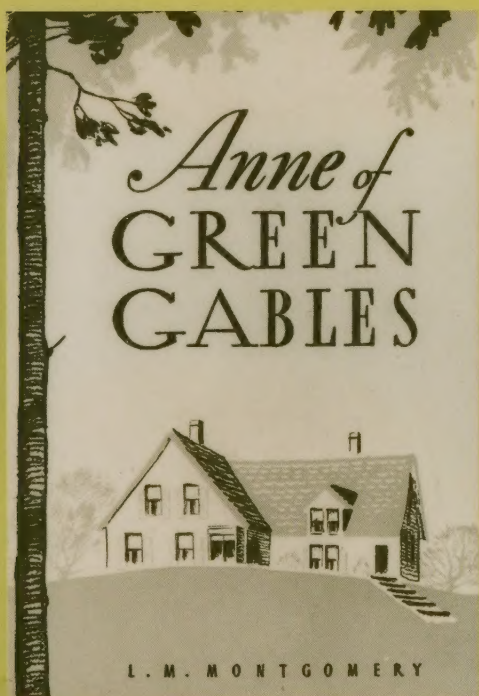


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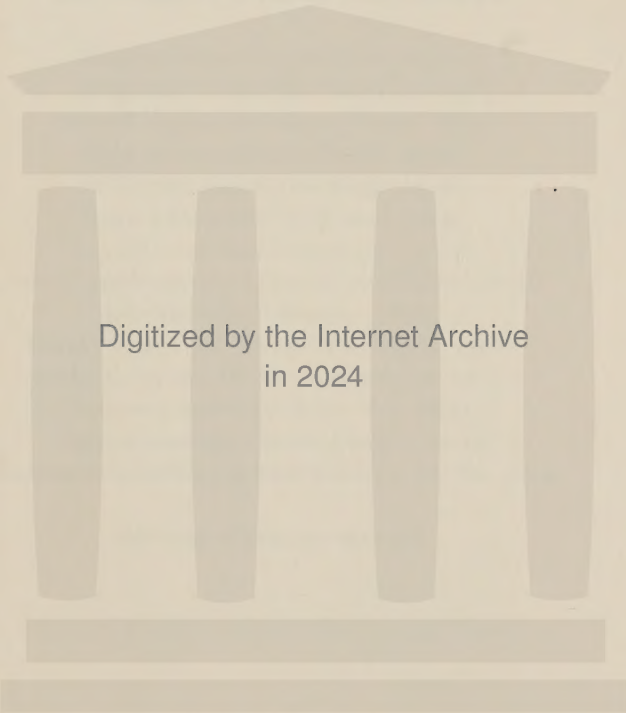
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CANADIAN CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Waterston, Elizabeth, 1922-
Kindling spirit : L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*

(Canadian fiction studies ; no. 19)
Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 1-55022-113-2

- I. Montgomery, Lucy Maud, 1874-1942. *Anne of Green Gables*.
I. Title. II. Series.

PS8526.055A7538 1993 C813'.52 C91-095021-0
PR9199.3.M65A7538 1993

This book has been published with the assistance of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Tourism of the Province of Ontario, through funds provided by the Ontario Publishing Centre, and with the assistance of grants from The Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Government of Canada through the Department of Communications, and the Canadian Studies and Special Projects Directorate of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

The cover features a reproduction of the dust-wrapper from an early edition of *Anne of Green Gables*, courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

Frontispiece photograph courtesy L.M. Montgomery Collection, University of Guelph Archives.

Design and imaging by ECW Type & Art, Oakville, Ontario.
Printed and bound by Kromar Printing, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Distributed by General Distribution Services,
30 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2T6.

Published by ECW PRESS,
1980 Queen Street East,
Toronto, Ontario M4L 1J2.



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A Note on the Author

Elizabeth Waterston was born in Montreal, and educated at McGill University, Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, and the University of Toronto. She has taught at Concordia University, Montreal, University of Western Ontario, London, and the University of Guelph; she is now Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at Guelph.

She was one of the founders, and is now co-editor of *Canadian Children's Literature*, a journal of criticism and review, and has recently written *Children's Literature in Canada*, a history and analysis of Canadian books in English for children and young adults. With Mary Rubio she co-edits *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (vol. I, 1985; vol. II, 1987) and with Dr. Rubio has also written comments on individual works by L.M. Montgomery for a Junior Classic edition of the novels. Her lifelong love of the Anne books was rekindled when her five children were growing up; she is now indoctrinating nine grandchildren in the delights of L.M. Montgomery.

Dr. Waterston's publications on Canadiana include *Survey: A Short History of Canadian Literature, Pioneers in Agriculture*, and *Canada to 1900: The Travellers*. She has also published extensively on Scottish literature.

Kindling Spirit:
L.M. Montgomery's
Anne of Green Gables

Chronology

- 1874 Lucy Maud Montgomery born 30 November, into a family of Scots-English farmers on the north shore of Prince Edward Island.
- 1876 Death of her mother Clara Macneill Montgomery; left by her father Hugh John Montgomery to be raised by maternal grandparents Lucy and Alexander Macneill in Cavendish, P.E.I.
- 1880-90 Winters at school, summers on the Macneill farm, at the seashore, and in Park Corner with her Campbell cousins; writes poetry and keeps a diary from the age of nine.
- 1890-91 Travels across Canada from P.E.I. to Saskatchewan, with her grandfather Senator Donald Montgomery, to join her father and stepmother and attend high school in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. First publications: November 1890, a poem in the Charlottetown *Patriot*; February 1891, an essay in the Montreal *Witness*; June 1891, an article in the Prince Albert *Times*.
- 1891-92 Returns to Cavendish and Park Corner: a year out of school.
- 1892-93 Finishes school with high final marks in provincial examinations.
- 1893-94 Takes a teacher's course at Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Publishes in College *Record* and Charlottetown *Guardian*.
- 1894-95 Teaches at Bideford, P.E.I. Publishes short stories and poems in *Ladies' Journal*.
- 1895-96 Studies at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. First earnings from her writing, from Philadelphia *Golden Days* and Boston *Youth's Companion*.

- 1896-97 Teaches at Belmont, P.E.I. Becomes engaged to Edwin Simpson, a Baptist minister. Poems and stories published in *American Agriculturist*, *Ladies' World*, *Philadelphia Times*, etc.
- 1897-98 Teaches at Lower Bedeque, P.E.I. Breaks off engagement to Simpson, and also rejects Herman Leard, a young Bedeque farmer with whom she has fallen in love. Grandfather Macneill's death brings her back to Cavendish, to help her 76-year-old grandmother. Publishes 11 stories and 14 poems.
- 1899 Death of Herman Leard. Stories published this year include one republished in *Anne of Avonlea*.
- 1900 Death of her father in Prince Albert.
- 1901-02 Works as copy-editor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the *Daily Echo*; after 7 months returns to Cavendish.
- 1902-04 Keeping house for her grandmother, reading, writing, gardening, acting as assistant postmistress. Stories from this period will reappear in *Chronicles of Avonlea*, *Story Girl*, and *Further Chronicles of Avonlea*.
- 1905 Friendship with cousin Frederica Campbell and with the new Presbyterian minister, Rev. Ewan Macdonald. Writes *Anne of Green Gables*.
- 1906 Engaged to marry Ewan Macdonald; he leaves for a year's study in Scotland. Writes "Una of the Garden," later revised as *Kilmeny of the Orchard*.
- 1907 *Anne of Green Gables* accepted by L.C. Page of Boston. Begins work on *Anne of Avonlea*.
- 1908 *Anne of Green Gables* published; goes through six editions, 19,000 copies, in five months; evokes praise from reviewers and letters from admirers including Mark Twain.
- 1909 *Anne of Avonlea* (about Anne as a young teacher) published as well as over 50 stories and poems. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Swedish.
- 1910 Ewan Macdonald moves to the Presbyterian church in Leaskdale, Ontario. *Kilmeny of the Orchard* is published. Governor-General Earl Grey asks to meet Montgomery

- in Charlottetown. Travels to Boston to visit publisher L.C. Page. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Dutch.
- 1911 Grandmother dies in March, aged 87. *The Story Girl* published in May. Marries Ewan Macdonald 5 July in Park Corner. After two months' honeymoon in Scotland and England, settles into Presbyterian manse at Leaskdale, Ontario, 60 miles north-east of Toronto.
- 1912 *Chronicles of Avonlea* (older stories revised to entail Anne) published. First child Chester Cameron Macdonald born 7 July. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Polish.
- 1913 *The Golden Road*, first of her novels composed in Ontario, published.
- 1914 Second son Hugh Alexander born and died 13 August.
- 1915 *Anne of the Island* (about Anne's college days) published. Gives birth to youngest son Ewan Stuart Macdonald 7 October. Experiences wartime pressures as a minister's wife in a parish devastated by casualties.
- 1916 *The Watchman, and Other Poems* published (13 new poems plus 50 others published since 1899). Changes publishers, from L.C. Page of Boston to McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart of Toronto.
- 1917 *Anne's House of Dreams* (about Anne's early days of marriage and motherhood) published. "The Alpine Path," an autobiography, in *Everywoman's World* of Toronto.
- 1918 Lawsuit against Page over shortchanging in royalties and unauthorized selling of reprint rights. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Norwegian.
- 1919 Wins first case against Page in Boston. Frederica Campbell dies of influenza. Ewan Macdonald suffers nervous breakdown. Publishes *Rainbow Valley* (Anne's children befriend the motherless children of a dreamy minister). *Anne of Green Gables* made into a film with Mary Miles Minter.
- 1920 L.C. Page, unauthorized, publishes early stories as *Further Chronicles of Avonlea*; second lawsuit launched in Boston. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Finnish.
- 1921 *Rilla of Ingleside* (about Anne's children as young adults in World War I) published.

- 1923 *Emily of New Moon* published. Becomes first Canadian woman to become a member of the British Royal Society of Arts.
- 1925 *Emily Climbs* published. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into French.
- 1926 *The Blue Castle* (an adult romance set in Muskoka, Ontario) published. Moves with her family to Ewan Macdonald's new parish at Norval, Ontario.
- 1927 *Emily's Quest* published. Invited to meet Prince of Wales and Duke of York (later King Edward VIII and King George VI) in Ottawa.
- 1928 Her sons now both away at boarding school.
- 1929 *Magic for Marigold* published.
- 1930 Makes a speaking tour through the Canadian west.
- 1931 *A Tangled Web* (a novel for adults) published. Older son Chester enters University of Toronto as a law student.
- 1933 *Pat of Silver Bush* published. *Anne of Green Gables* translated into Icelandic. Younger son Stuart enters University as a medical student. Chester reveals his secret marriage.
- 1934 *Courageous Women* (biographies written with Marian Keith and M.B. McKinley) published. Second film version of *Anne of Green Gables* with Anne Shirley. L.C. Page Co. gets \$40,000 for the rights to this talking picture. First grandchild is born. Husband Ewan spends four months in mental hospital.
- 1935 *Mistress Pat* published. Ewan Macdonald retires from the ministry; family moves to west-end Toronto. Awarded the Order of the British Empire.
- 1936 *Anne of Windy Poplars* (stories of Anne as a young school teacher) published. Birth of second grandchild.
- 1937 *Jane of Lantern Hill* published. *Anne of Green Gables* adapted as a play twice: by Alice Chadwick, and by Wilbur Braun. Suffers a nervous collapse. Ewan a "mental case."
- 1939 Last visit to P.E.I. Recovery from nervous breakdown. *Anne of Ingleside* (early days of Anne's marriage and young motherhood) published. Deep depression at outbreak of World War II.

- 1942 Dies 24 April in Toronto; buried in Cavendish cemetery, Prince Edward Island.
- 1943 Husband Rev. Ewan Macdonald dies.
- 1948 Monument in memory of Lucy Maud Montgomery is erected in the National Park in Cavendish. Posthumous publications include short stories edited by her son Stuart and others (1974, 1979, 1988, 1989, 1990); translations of *Anne of Green Gables* into 8 more languages (1951–80); volumes of letters (1960, 1980); selected poetry (1987); and journals (1985, 1987).

The Importance of the Work

Anne of Green Gables offers four gifts to readers and critics. The first is the gift of story, the trick that keeps us reading, turning the pages to see what comes next. The story of Anne and Avonlea, with its recurring suspenseful situations and surprising, funny, exciting resolutions, initiates readers into the pleasure of following a narrative, the fun of becoming involved in a plot. Anne's own focus on story telling — her ability to incite, convince, abash, and amaze her listeners with words — reinforces our pleasure in the narrative.

Secondly, Anne herself, imaginative, rambunctious, articulate, misunderstood, intense in her responses to nature, to ideas, to books, offers a model to all children pushing eagerly though stressfully toward maturity. Her relations to her bosom friend, her kindred spirits, her surrogate parents and adult neighbours and her disturbing male rival reflect the way a single being develops: self-aware, self-contained, yet involved in other's lives. Response to Anne releases fears and desires within the reader and aids the accommodation of egotism and the pressure of social norms.

Anne of Green Gables also offers a fresh and vivid awareness of the world of nature. The colours, shapes, sounds of the external world, as experienced and expressed by Anne and her creator, form a web of awareness of the environment.

Finally, the fact that the creator, the protagonist, and many of the personae that encircle her are female adds an interest to readers aware of the constrictions on feminine experience. This novel has served to empower female aspirations. Without antagonizing male readers, it subtly asserts that a "mere girl" can transform life.

This Canadian book, written for young readers, has found an enduring worldwide audience. L.M. Montgomery first drew readers to her imagined island in 1908. It was a great time for children's

books: Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* was published that year, L. Frank Baum's *Ozma of Oz* the year before; and other children's classics clustered in the same period: Beatrix Potter's *Tale of Peter Rabbit* and Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* in 1902, J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* in 1904. Soon to come was Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, 1911. Children's books proliferated at this time partly because of the emergence of huge cheap presses, the development of a network of bookstores and public libraries, and the establishment of "home" magazines including farm journals and Sunday school papers. Concurrently, increasing urbanism separated children from traditional story tellers; and of course there was as yet no radio, no gramophone record, no television or moving picture to take the place of the traditional teller of tales. People like L.M. Montgomery stepped forward to fill a gap. *Anne of Green Gables* was a book written for a known and guaranteed audience. It became and remained a landmark in children's literature.

But in 1908 *Anne of Green Gables* climbed to the top of the best seller list because adults also found it good reading. Here was the sweet and rueful pleasure of remembering one's own past enthusiasms, vaunting ambitions, and embarrassing scrapes. *Anne of Green Gables* was not the only children's book to become a favourite of adults because it stirred childhood memories: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Huckleberry Finn* have held a similar appeal.

The North American best seller list of 1908 also included adult novels such as John Fox's *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, demonstrating the strong popular taste for local colour and pathos, and Mary Roberts Rinehart's *The Circular Staircase*, illustrating the fashion for quick-moving suspense. *Anne of Green Gables* rode to best sellerdom on the same perennially appealing qualities and added a new humorous blend of whimsy and irony. Professional competence and a deep rapport with the spirit of the times are among the ingredients that create best sellers. *Anne of Green Gables* displays both these ingredients.

These elements had been developing in Canada not only among the writers who enjoyed spectacular successes in sales, but also in the general corps of Canadian novelists and poets. Since the confederation of the provinces into a dominion in 1867, poets such as Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and Isabella Valancy Crawford and fiction writers like Sara Jeannette Duncan and Duncan Campbell

Scott, dealing effectively with regional scenes, had developed an appreciative audience for Canadian material. L.M. Montgomery knew the works of most of these writers, because Canadian school texts, especially in the Maritime provinces, had early included them along with such British and American writers as Tennyson and Hawthorne. Montgomery followed the post-Confederation Canadian writers in catching the sights and sounds and social patterns of a particular region and connecting this local colour with national attitudes. She shared Crawford's gift of imagery, Duncan's awareness of social nuance, Carman's mystic intensity. *Anne of Green Gables* marks an important stage of development in Canadian literature, as well as in children's literature.

Keenly aware as a professional writer of the work of her own contemporaries such as Nellie McClung and Marshall Saunders, Montgomery developed techniques for presenting values comparable to theirs: optimistic affirmation of a possible rise from rags not to riches but to a secure place in a respectable middle class; humorous tolerance of eccentricities, not outrageous or wildly idiosyncratic like the characters of wild west humorists but with the loved oddity of small village characters; and romantic emphasis on love, affection, and the binding of hearts in mutual respect. Her vision of life in early twentieth-century Canada is pastoral, but tempered by wit that has the tang of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912).

Anne of Green Gables quickly moved beyond Canada to a wider English-speaking audience and then to a world readership. Anne's imaginative qualities, her articulate love of natural beauty, her funny adventures and the sweetness of her unfolding womanhood, all made her an early favourite in Britain and the United States. Anne later became important to readers in repressed or severely structured societies for her spunky independence and her resistance to unfair authority. Anne's yearning for a home of her own and her intense response to a beloved countryside lifted her story to symbolic significance for uprooted people in Europe in the years between the world wars. Since World War II, new generations of readers have turned to *Anne of Green Gables* for the optimism and humour which could revive low spirits. Often the reception of the work has bypassed recognition of the fact that this was a Canadian story.

Everywhere the novel achieved not only a wide sweep of reader-

ship but also a depth of impact on individuals. Identifying with Anne has marked an initiation phase of life for young readers; re-reading *Anne of Green Gables* remains a refreshment for older readers jaded by cynical, violent novels. Its verbal textures, its fine and funny people and elegantly described settings, its clarification of gender roles, and its simple, pleasingly manipulated, universally relevant story line make *Anne of Green Gables* an important work.

Critical Reception

Popular response to *Anne of Green Gables* the year it appeared was very enthusiastic — witness the surge into six editions within five months. Critical response kept pace at first. L.M. Montgomery reported with delight to her literary pen pals that a clipping service had sent her hundreds of reviews, all but a very few hailing the novel as charming, well-written, imaginative, memorable.

In the next few years, as she brought out sequels or similar stories, critics used *Anne of Green Gables* as a touchstone to measure her achievement. Literary critics in the years between 1908 and 1920 tended to echo Mark Twain's comment, that L.M. Montgomery had created "the dearest, and most lovable child in fiction since the immortal Alice" (*Green Gables Letters* 80). The most influential of contemporary reviews, in the *London Spectator* (1909), reveals the criteria by which a novel was judged: creation of "wholesome and attractive" characters, skilful portrayal of "sylvan glories," and an offering of problem-free entertainment (426).

By the 1920s, however, critical standards had changed. New writers had appeared — James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf — self-conscious as to style and structure, taut in tone, anti-sentimental in story and theme. In the light of this new taste, critical respect for the work of L.M. Montgomery dimmed. First creators of critical volumes on Canadian literature dismissed her work, or ignored it. Archibald MacMechan, who had taught Montgomery years earlier during her brief stay at Dalhousie University, included four pages on her work in his *Head-waters of Canadian Literature* (1924) — pages rather condescending to the book that "just misses the kind of success which convinces the critic while it captures the general reader" (211). Lionel Stevenson's 1926

Appraisals of Canadian Literature reinforced the patronizing tone (128). Desmond Pacey, in *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952), capped the critical put-down: in *Anne of Green Gables*, he opines, "the sentimentalism is a little less cloying than is usual in books of its type. . . . It had all the features of the kind of escape literature which a materialistic and vulgar generation craved: . . . sweetly-sad, innocent, and pathetic" (98). Few of these critics could admit, as Arthur Phelps did in *Canadian Writers* (1951), "I enjoyed some of it as a relief from the tension and self-conscious craftsmanship and experimental techniques of many contemporary works" (88).

When studies in Canadian literature became stylish in the late 1960s, anthologies which sprang into use across the country by-passed Montgomery's work. None of the editions of Klinck and Watters's *Anthology of Canadian Literature*, the most widely used text of the period when Canadian studies proliferated in universities, included any work by Montgomery. The *Literary History of Canada*, edited by Carl Klinck, continued that dismissal, both in its first edition, 1965, and in the revised edition, 1975. *Anne of Green Gables* is not analyzed by Professors Roper, Beharriell, and Schieder in their important chapters, "New Forces, New Fiction, 1880-1920" and "Kinds of Fiction, 1880-1920," although in the chapter on "Writers of Fiction, 1880-1920" they do note Montgomery's success in depicting "the charms of childhood and adolescence" (331), and praise her description of scenery and her "sensitive creation of an imaginative little girl." A longer discussion of *Anne* appears in Marjorie McDowell's chapter on "Children's Books." McDowell's paragraph on Montgomery refers to sentimentality and over-optimism but also praises the whimsy, idealism, natural charm, moral tone, and powerful unity of mood. Intensely regional, full of idiosyncratic characters, says McDowell, *Anne* is "a real, if modest, triumph" (627). In this same first edition of the *Literary History*, Northrop Frye uses *Anne of Green Gables* to introduce his important thesis about the dominance of nostalgia and the significance of pastoral myth in Canadian writing (840).

Even as a book for children, *Anne of Green Gables* dimmed in reputation in the 1960s. In her landmark history of children's literature, *The Republic of Childhood*, Sheila Egoff nodded at Montgomery's popularity but cautioned against the "increasingly sentimental dishonesty" of the later books (252). In 1975, when a new edition of

the *Literary History of Canada* appeared, Egoff replaced McDowell as analyst of children's literature. In three sentences she referred to Montgomery's "lush Prince Edward Island settings, . . . eccentric adults, . . . light-hearted and spirited heroine" (II: 138), mentioned the book's lasting popularity, and noted the dissipation of appeal in its sequels.

Critics abroad noted Canadian dismissiveness. British writer John Rowe Townsend countered Egoff's scorn by insisting on his liking for Anne (*Written for Children*, 84-85). In his classic study of best sellers, the American Frank Luther Mott gave a favorable evaluation: "The characters are excellent, the enthusiasm for nature is contagious," but he added the rather patronizing phrase, "and there is charm even for grown-ups in the story" (*Golden Multitudes* 217-18).

The tide began to turn in the 1970s. Margaret Atwood in *Survival* (1972) cited Marilla as one of the "powerful, negative old women" so central in Canadian fiction (205). The cover of my *Survey: A Short History of Canadian Literature* (1973) featured a picture of Montgomery as one of five memorable Canadian writers, the others being Leacock, Layton, MacLennan, and Atwood. Clara Thomas's *Our Nature, Our Voices* (1973) brought Montgomery into focus, as part of Thomas's recovery of women writers who had been dismissed, not because of any literary inadequacy but because a patriarchal system in universities, schools, publishing houses, book reviewing, and bookstore management had underplayed their achievements. In 1975, the year that the critical journal *Canadian Children's Literature* was founded, this magazine highlighted Montgomery's work in an important series of reassessments. The journal has subsequently brought out significant commentary on the author by Canadian and other critics.

Revival of critical interest has been fed by the appearance of supplementary materials uncollected in Montgomery's own lifetime: volumes assembled from her over 500 short stories, by Catherine McLay, Stuart Macdonald, and Rea Wilmshurst; a volume of her poems selected by John Ferns and Kevin McCabe; collections of her letters, edited by Wilfrid Eggleston and by F.W.P. Bolger and Elizabeth Epperly; a selection of her journals, edited by Mary Rubio and myself; and serious biographical studies, by F.W.P. Bolger, Mollie Gillen, and by the creators of a good CBC and NFB study, *The Road to Green Gables*.

Critical interest in the 1980s and 1990s was fed also by the surge of feminist criticism, with its emphasis on marginalized writers: women disregarded by the male “academy” of teachers, critics, and reviewers. Interest in covert, sometimes unconscious subtexts leads readers back to discussion, for instance, of the “happy ending” in which Anne, renouncing her ambition to go to Redmond University, accepts the role of supporter of the aging Marilla, and accepts also the romantic friendship of Gilbert Blythe. *Anne of Green Gables* is taken seriously by new feminist critics. Jane Burns, writing in 1977, examines Montgomery’s attitudes towards women’s ambitions and the roles open to them, as expressed in the letters Montgomery wrote to pen-pals Weber and MacMillan, and then looks at the stereotypical abilities and achievements assigned to Anne, and also to Emily Starr in Montgomery’s later trilogy. Jacqueline Berke (1978) relates Anne to other heroines in popular girls’ fiction such as Heidi, Rebecca, Mary in *The Secret Garden*, and Nancy Drew. In all such stories Berke sees vivid responses to experience; Anne in particular satisfies girls’ longings for independence. Carol Gay (1986) looks at the whole Avonlea series as the creation of a community as it appears to girls: Anne’s humour, her development, and her capacity for friendship are seen in Gay’s article as contributing to the flow of life in her own community. Susan Drain, in “Community and the Individual in *Anne of Green Gables*” (1986), emphasizes that in Anne as in other stories of orphans, adoption into the community means enforced adaptation to its norms. In the introduction to her annotated bibliography of articles on *Anne of Green Gables* (1989) Barbara Garner pulls together the points in these articles to reveal the direction of feminist interests: *Anne of Green Gables* is catching the attention of feminists as a study of women’s concerns, the experiences and attitudes of girls in a male-dominated society, and the aspirations and ambitions of an intelligent fictional character and a real female author. Temma Berg (1988) summarizes: the “Anne” books “convey a subtle but revolutionary feminism which has empowered generations of young girls” (128).

Another look at Anne in the context of girls’ books appears in T.D. MacLulich, “L.M. Montgomery and the Literary Heroine: Jo, Rebecca, Anne, and Emily” (1985). An interesting companion piece is Perry Nodelman’s excellent 1980 study of girls’ books as purveying myths — dangerous ones since they encourage the continuance

into maturity of a mythology of happy adjustment. Writing, like Nodelman, in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, in 1986, Janet Weiss-Town counters Nodelman's view by emphasizing "unfeminine" qualities in Anne, drawing on feminist definitions by writers like Elaine Showalter.

In short, critics bent on raising women's consciousness of the powers of patriarchy at first condemned Anne's choosing to remain as teacher of little children and as housekeeper for an older woman as a heavy and wrongly accepted burden. More recently, feminists have emphasized Anne's resistance to gothic romance, and her shift from imaginative avoidance to social commitment. These contradictory readings permit a new look at Anne in a feminist age.

Choosing another range of stories for comparison, Mary Rubio examines Anne's qualities in relation to those of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, in "Satire, Realism, and Imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*" (1975). In other more recent articles Mary Rubio has drawn on her knowledge of Montgomery's journals to enrich understanding of the achievements in *Anne*. Catherine Sheldrick Ross shifts the point of comparison, and relates Montgomery's heroine to the women characters in other fictions by Canadian women writers, in "Calling Back the Ghost of the Old-time Heroine: Duncan, Montgomery, Atwood, Laurence, and Munro" (1979).

Clearly, most studies of *Anne of Green Gables* have appeared in Canadian journals, or in American and British ones devoted to children's literature, including *The Horn Book* and *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. Growing interest abroad, however, has been shown by the response to papers given by Mary Rubio at interdisciplinary international conferences, at Aarhus, Denmark (1983), at Salamanca, Spain (1989), at Helsinki, Finland (1990), and in Edinburgh, Scotland (1991).

Saturday Night, *Canadian Geographic*, *Chatelaine*, and *Maclean's* are among the general magazines that have picked up on the popularity of the book and its television, movie, and stage versions. Here too the critical response has generally echoed the popular fondness for Montgomery's work.

Critical response to *Anne of Green Gables* appears in a more academic form in graduate theses. Eight theses, including one presented in Poland, are listed in Barbara Garner's annotated bibliography; already more have been reported to the bibliographer.

In reviewing "critical response," however, we should note that the impact of *Anne of Green Gables* has been "critical" in another sense. Many talented young women have found a reading of the novel played a critical part in their own development. Carol Shields writes in *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers* (1990) of her childhood response to her mother's copy of *Anne of Green Gables*: finding "a consciousness attuned to nature, a female model of courage, goodness, and candour, possessed of an emotional capacity that triumphs and converts. [Anne] re-shuffled the values of society by a primary act of imagination" (McMullen 12). Anne became a powerful influence on Shields as a young woman facing her own "withholding world" and finding ways to echo and interrogate it. Astrid Lingren, the Swedish creator of *Pippi Longstocking*, American Laura Weaver, and Canadians Jean Little and Janet Lunn are among the writers of children's books whose works embed allusions to Anne. Margaret Atwood appropriates names and motifs in half-ironic echo: in *Cat's Eye* two central characters are called "Elaine" and "Cordelia."

For many years it appeared as if L.M. Montgomery, although deeply influential, would be dismissed as part of popular culture, not to be taken seriously by critical analysts. Yet any study of best sellers shows that sweeping popular appeal, impact on succeeding generations of writers, and critical acclaim are not necessarily mutually exclusive, witness Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain, for example. Nor are women writers barred from three-fold acclaim, by general readers, specialist critics, and literary disciples, again witness Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. Writing for and about children does decrease the probability of gaining serious critical attention, but again the exceptions would include Lewis Carroll and Rudyard Kipling.

In Montgomery's case, a contemporary shift in focus seems to be drawing her work back into the orbit of serious critical judgement. Excellent recent studies include Elizabeth Epperly's *The Fragrance of Sweet Grass: L.M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance*, and Gabriella Ahmanson's *A Life and Its Mirrors: A Feminist Perspective on the Work of L.M. Montgomery*. Feminists, especially those interested in postmodernist techniques, are leading the way in studying the ironies, subtexts, and discontinuities in *Anne of Green Gables*.

Reading of the Text

L.M. Montgomery, moving with a small red-headed orphan under the arching apple-blossoms to a first glimpse of the sandy shore and the quiet farm fields rimmed by a restless sea, put a part of Canadian landscape on the literary map of the world. And the imagined island, besides becoming a part of the vicarious universe of young readers, also drew and has continued to draw hundreds of thousands of older readers all over the world.

Japanese readers get on airplanes and fly half way around the world to Anne's island, in order to see Lover's Lane and the sea, to smell the apple blossoms and eat some ice cream, to experience freedom of movement and open spaces — all because the book has meant so much to them in their own beautiful but crowded and regimented island. In Poland in the 1950s, to cite another surprising example of the book's power, young people in the resistance movement chose code names from *Anne*, acting out Anne's subversive messages of unbreakable optimism and independence with their young lives.

Less dramatic but still surprising is the way people everywhere react physically to a reading of *Anne of Green Gables*. They chuckle out loud when Anne asks Marilla "Can you eat when you are in the depths of despair?" and Marilla responds, "I've never been in the depths of despair so I can't say" (37). They gasp when Anne lets Mrs. Lynde know that she is fat and clumsy and without a spark of imagination. They cry when Matthew dies.

Each reader of the millions who have enjoyed *Anne of Green Gables* since it was first published in 1908 responds in a unique way. Each sees a different Anne as the words lift off the page and create a person in the mind's eye: an "odd little figure in the stiff, ugly dress, with the long braids of red hair" (33); or a teen-aged girl, something so stylish about her as she tucks a little white rose behind her ear.

“Doesn’t she look lovely?” Diana sighs at the sight of this later Anne; but Marilla sniffs, “She looks neat and proper” (373). How we see Anne depends in part on what experiences we have had with ugly clothes, red hair, white roses, bosom friends, and repressive elders.

How we hear the narrator’s voice telling us about Anne and her world depends on the voices around us in the “real” world, the accents, the joy in words or lack of it, the readiness to express or repress friendship, loneliness, love of beauty, or the comic spirit.

How we follow her story depends on what part of a real life story we have enacted and what stories we know from books. *Anne of Green Gables* shifts with the swing of the seasons of life. Each reader finds different charges of excitement when Anne cracks a slate over a boy’s head, dyes her hair, or drops her flowers at the moment of Matthew’s death. At each stage, characters in the book can arouse as much interest as do the people of actuality, and often they exercise more influence on behaviour. Every reader will find in one character a model, or a horrible to-be-avoided example, or a ruefully acknowledged double.

Modern students of literature say these responses are very much a part of the totality of the book. A novel is not a thing in itself, say the “reader response critics,” but a joint production of author and reader. In turn, the response becomes richer as the reader becomes aware of the personal motivations, biases, and memories being brought into play during the reading. This flush of self-knowledge can be quickened by reading critical comments, and comparing what the critic found with what seemed apparent on the first run through.

A book with the enduring power of *Anne* is rich enough to glow more brightly after being submitted to each new mode of criticism. The pleasure of rereading an old favourite is fed by the fun of finding rebuttals or reinforcement in a new and lively debate.

When you turn the pages of *Anne of Green Gables* for the first or the twentieth time, you can bring critical interpretations from a wide range of positions to aid your reading. You can tap folklorists for some light on traditional motifs in Anne’s story, or follow the narratologists as they note the strategies of blocking materials into effective sequence. With Northrop Frye, you can become aware of archetypal patterns in the descriptions of scenery, or you can join Freudian or Jungian critics in recognizing in Anne’s story the kinds of symbols that recur in dreams. Of course each critic, like each

reader, brings a personal bias to the interpretation of the novel.

This section of the book you are now perusing is called "A Reading of the Text." It is of course not *the* reading, just one interpretation, offered to accompany the gift L.M. Montgomery presented to us all in *Anne of Green Gables*.

TO THE WORLD OF STORY

I first heard *Anne of Green Gables* read aloud, chapter by chapter, in Sunday School. It was a Presbyterian Sunday school, and our teacher was the Minister's daughter, aged sixteen or seventeen. Every week she whisked us through our catechism and Bible verses, and then we turned to our secular scripture — *Anne*. Afterwards we joined the rest of the Sunday School to parade up to the big church, where the adults joined us in a children's hymn. Our favourite was "Standing by a Purpose True; or, Dare to be a Daniel" — a good reinforcement of *Anne of Green Gables*:

Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!

(*The Book of Praise* 459)

I could read by myself then; but I didn't read *Anne of Green Gables* on my own. There was too much pleasure in the waiting all week, to find out how Anne got out of her current mishap, or what misadventure she would fall into next. L.M. Montgomery had done her job well. She had created a special kind of pleasure — the fun of building up suspense over imaginary friends' lives, trying to guess how their problems would be untangled, and responding with surprise and satisfaction when the solution proved to be like yet unlike our own guesses.

When L.M. Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables* she was already an accomplished story teller, skilled in delivery of dialogue, description, and narrative bridging. By the time she was sixteen — a time when most of us settle for the more humdrum narratings of jokes or gossip — she had written and published short stories, drawing on her heritage as a member of a community which still treasured the skills of anecdote. A bibliography of her early short

stories, compiled by Toronto researcher Rea Wilmshurst, lists titles suggesting the kind of little incident she was working up into short stories in the years before she composed *Anne of Green Gables*; for example "A New-Fashioned Flavoring," "The Way of the Winning of Anne," "What Came of a Dare," and "Diana's Wedding-Dress" (Russell 67-70).

In her long apprenticeship period from 1889 to 1904 when she was sending short stories successively to the Sunday school papers, the women's journals, the agricultural magazines, and the glossier magazines, she had learned the tricks of the trade: creating a swift and suggestive opening, moving toward a moment of dramatic conflict quickly succeeded by another related but intensified clash, devising an ingenious unravelling. When she carried her story-telling into the more ample scope of a full-length novel, Montgomery maintained the narrative skills she had already developed and added new ones. She worked carefully over each chapter as a unit, a mini-story, and then repeated the narrative strategies on a grander scale. One way to appreciate her narrative art is to notice the structure, sequence, and grouping of chapters.

In *Anne of Green Gables* a clever manipulation of suspense and surprise pulls us into the fictional world of Avonlea. The first 8 chapters set up 3 puzzles: in a predictable community something unexpected is observed; into the home of a self-controlled and aging man and woman something alien, young, and exuberant erupts; and the unexpected, alien girl child who comes into the home and the community, wanting desperately to be accepted, is herself invaded by inexplicable rushes of impulse, aspiration, and sensibility. The opening draws readers into the puzzle-solving pleasure of unravelling these mysteries, finding out what happens to the child, the older people, and the community.

One of L.M. Montgomery's contemporaries, the complex novelist and critic Henry James, said in his preface to *The American* (1907) that beginning a novel is like embarking on a balloon trip. The balloon is tied to earth. Then, imperceptibly, the basket car is wafted aloft. The reader hardly notices when the cable is cut and the balloon is floating free, skimming through a realm of romance (*The Art of the Novel* 33-34). L.M. Montgomery's opening 8 chapters use realistic detail to facilitate this kind of gentle entry into imagined experience. She begins with the ordinary world of Mrs. Rachel Lynde: a

world of knitting and turnips, gossip and routine; then she lifts imperceptibly into a world of surprise, a world of story.

Repetitive titles suggest that the 8 opening chapters function like stanzas in a poem, discrete in content but connected in form. The 3 opening chapters signal “surprise . . . surprise . . . surprise.” That Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert would think of adopting an orphan surprises Mrs. Lynde, the community’s monitor; that the orphan should turn out to be a small scrawny girl surprises Matthew and Marilla in turn. Anne herself is more than surprised to discover she is unwanted: yet, even when devastated by this “most tragical thing,” she can still answer Marilla’s question, “What’s your name?” by surprising Marilla — and us — with a request to be called Cordelia, or if that queenly name is withheld, at least “please call me Anne spelled with an e” (35).

By the end of chapter 8, Anne has settled into Green Gables, the Cuthbert homestead. Her imagination, her honesty, her pathos have breached the accepted patterns of adult life on the farm. Green Gables has begun to accept Anne, and we too, as readers, have accepted her and her world — the cherry-tree in full bloom outside the window, the big barns, the blue glimpse of the sea, the sound of Matthew’s voice — “She’s such an interesting little thing” — and of Marilla’s — “It’d be more to the point if you could say she was a useful little thing” (68). Montgomery has whisked us neatly into a realm which has its own brand of “usefulness,” the world of fiction. She is ready to carry us forward into the community of Avonlea, and to show us how imagination can lead us into and out of a series of adventures, in a sequence of growth.

Like a traditional story teller she is ready to say, “And then . . .” ready to follow the balloon ascent with a series of engaging incidents in an imagined realm. We will be enticed into the next major section, the narration of Anne’s adventures in Avonlea, with a related signpost: “Mrs. Rachel Lynde is properly horrified” (88).

In heroic stories, as critic Joseph Campbell says in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the protagonist in this active part of the story will fight the elders, meet a rival, find an ally. In her early short stories, Montgomery usually created just such conflicts between heroes and thwarting antagonists. A sample title, chosen from many confrontational stories written just before *Anne of Green Gables*, is “The Strike at Putney” (1903), the story of women pitting themselves against the

men who run a local church. The conflicts presented when Anne faces Avonlea, however, fit neither the patterns perceived by Campbell and other commentators on traditional initiation stories, nor those established in Montgomery's own earlier fiction. Anne, a small hero, goes not into a lion's den or a fiery furnace, but into Mrs. Lynde's kitchen, or into Sunday school.

Anne is memorable not only because her adventures are like those in all the folk tales of quester heroes, but also because they are different. Like every hero, Anne finds a troublesome tempter in each of her adventures, and is rescued by an ingenious ally. But in her first conflicts her foe is neither a parental power figure nor a politically repressive force. The tempter, the trickster, each time is something in Anne's own nature: her impetuosity, or her moral pragmatism, or her carelessness, or her blindness to conventions. And in each of her early adventures, her rescuer is also a part of her own nature: her openness, her humility, her ingenuity, or her common sense. Anne's early scrapes are always the result not of an external challenge but of her own over-active imagination; the exits are always gloriously achieved by revving up that imagination in order to find an appropriate way to back out of trouble.

The story of Anne in Avonlea fills the next 20 chapters (9 to 28). As Anne develops, Montgomery varies the formula slightly. Scrape and escape still follow each other, but Anne will increasingly find salvation not from her own resources, but from adults in Avonlea enlisted as her helpers.

At first Anne's surprising troubles and their equally surprising and amusing solutions come in neatly paired chapters. Mrs. Lynde's horror in chapter 9 at Anne's outburst of insults is allayed in chapter 10 by Anne's outburst of abasement. Anne giving offense to the godly in chapter 11 by the outlandish act of wreathing her Sunday school hat in wild flowers is balanced by the moment in Diana's garden in chapter 12, when Anne's outlandish quality charms Diana into friendship. The "delights of anticipation" of a picnic, connected with the delighted admiration of Marilla's brooch in chapter 13, are countered by the loss-confession-discovery-picnic events in chapter 14. In this last case the glib tongue that has served to placate Mrs. Lynde by putting a real truth into a rhetorically effective form is wrongly used. Anne considers that the end (going to a picnic) justifies the means (misapplying her powers of confession). This time the

intensity of her disappointment becomes her ally. And this time Matthew points out another part of Anne's armour as she faces her own nature — she is "such a little thing," so young. Her childish sense of right and wrong got her into this scrape, and the sheer fact of her being a child gets her out of it.

After these 3 pairs of chapters (9–10, 11–12, 13–14) the pattern of scrape-and-solution threatens to become predictable. Montgomery breaks the rhythm with the climactic chapter 15 ("A Tempest in the School Tea-pot"), unmatched in two senses. Nothing in the book matches the power of this tempest chapter, in which Gilbert first appears as admirer, antagonist, would-be friend, academic rival, and source of excruciating humiliation. And no following chapter matches Anne's dilemma with a pat solution. For a resolution of the drama set up in this chapter, when Anne thwacks him over the head with her slate, we will have to wait until chapter 28 ("An Unfortunate Lily Maid"); and then again, since the "Lily Maid" chapter resolves nothing, till the end of the book, and indeed beyond it.

Gilbert's first appearance in the story thus offers an aesthetic surprise as well as a freshening of plot interest by the suggestion of boy-and-girl romance. The interruption of the 2-chapter units is a welcome break in the predictable pattern; and when, after chapter 15, Montgomery resumes the pattern of problem and quick solution, she delicately varies the units.

Three chapters (16–18) link Anne's October loss of her bosom friend Diana through the cordial/wine mixup with her January regaining of Diana by saving the life of little sister Minnie May. This 3-chapter group reiterates the motif established in earlier 2-chapter units: a memorable misadventure is linked with an apt reversal. Anne gets Diana drunk by overplaying the part of mannerly hostess; she atones for this by acting on memories of early days in an unmannerly foster-home.

Next, 2 single chapters (19 and 20) each create both suspense and release. In chapter 19 Anne leaps into bed on top of "thin, prim and rigid" Miss Barry because she is filled with high spirits and pride at being a guest; by the end of the chapter she has charmed the cross old lady by her genuine humility and her rich volubility. In chapter 20, her rejection of the commonplace leads to the terror of the Haunted Wood; her response to Marilla's commonsense order lets her outface that terror.

Montgomery restores the paired-chapter structure in chapters 21–22, and 23–24. But now the solutions come not from Anne working through her own turbulence, but from the efforts of others. The comic humiliation of the liniment cake caused by over-intense desire to impress Mrs. Allan is salved by Mrs. Allan's kindness. The fall from the ridgepole thanks to Josie Pye's taunts is balanced by Anne's rise to competent performance on stage, thanks to Miss Stacy's encouragement. The two adult women who have recently come into Avonlea thus change the essential pattern of Anne's growing up.

Variations in the reiterated pattern of scrape and escape are like the change in tone and pace of an oral story-teller. They signal the ending of Anne's childish storms and stresses. In chapter 25 as if to emphasize the shift to maturity, Montgomery briefly moves away from Anne and focuses on Matthew's thoughts and actions. It is Matthew who enables Anne to achieve stylish beauty and the rounded shape of maturing womanhood. Marilla has her turn in chapter 27 to help Anne find a rational escape from her most theatrical misadventure in search of beauty — the green-dyed hair.

In chapter 26 the Story Club daringly turns us inward toward contemplation of the very art form we are in the process of enjoying. I will return in a moment to the question of where that wheel within the fictional wheel carries us.

The "Lily Maid" chapter ends the Avonlea epoch and the story of Anne as a child. This time it is Gilbert who saves Anne from a dilemma brought on by literary romancing. Anne ends the chapter and the confrontational phase of her life by renouncing not only Gilbert but also imagination, vanity, meddling, and "being too romantic" (317).

The adventure on the pond notably does not solve the Anne-Gilbert tension, but its events mark a surprising twist in traditional story motifs. In the traditional tale of any young person's quest for a position in society, the hero usually strains to achieve a fortune, a mate, sovereignty, or a combination of these desirables. In Montgomery's early stories the object of desire was usually a mate: for example the list of short stories published in 1908, the same year as *Anne*, includes these revealing titles: "Anna's Love Letters," "The Winning of Frances," "The Twins and a Wedding," "A Will, a Way, and a Woman" (Russell 83–84). In *Anne of Green Gables* Montgomery reverses the formula: Anne renounces the mating game.

Thus far, the novel as a whole has moved toward its conclusion with a steady, lightly varied, yet firmly recurring beat. Now the expected rhythm of recurring scrapes and escapes, maintained through 20 chapters, ends. Anne experiences unmitigated success throughout the next 8 chapters.

The archetypal story would have followed the accounts of heroic conflict first with a traumatic descent into an underworld of terror and grief, a plunge beneath dark waters; then it would have moved to a triumphant period of power and reign. Montgomery reverses this order. She gives her protagonist the glory first, and then the descent into sorrow.

Aesthetically, the 8 triumphant chapters (29 to 36) appear to round off the story with a formal unit symmetrically concordant with the opening. Like the opening 8 chapters, they are tied together by the device of reiterative titles. "Queen's" . . . "Queen's" . . . "Queen's" echoes, in those titles, suggesting female glory and power; and the chapter that ends this movement is titled "The Glory and the Dream." Part of the glory eventuates at White Sands — one of many plot devices that link the closing movement with the opening one. At White Sands, in chapter 6, Anne, "a helpless little creature," was menaced by scrawny Mrs. Blewett; now, 6 chapters from the end of the book, Anne is acclaimed and admired at White Sands by the stout and wealthy Pink Lady. The symmetrical framing effect is all the more effective because the symmetry will in the end be broken by the addition of the 2 final chapters, on death and change.

These 8 chapters have been criticized for sentimentality. Something saccharine, detractors say, surfaces in chapters 29 to 36. Here, say the critics, Montgomery loses the bite and snap of the early chapters. Anne loses her amusing rhetoric; Marilla loses her gaunt common sense. There are no more confrontations, no more ridiculous enterprises or aspirations. Anne acts with grace during a visit to Miss Josephine Barry in Charlottetown. Anne is encouraged by Marilla to join the "Queen's Class" and prepare for college. Anne learns to use short strong words and to keep her imaginative thoughts to herself. She ties with Gilbert for first place in the Provincial matriculation exams, and stars alone on the concert stage at White Sands. As a Queen's girl she wins a scholarship and makes Matthew and Marilla proud of her. All social problems seem solved; Anne and Avonlea subside into mutual respect for each other.

Too much sweetness and light? One could argue for the realism of these 8 chapters in psychological terms. Overactive little girls do grow up and learn to redirect their energies. Sharp tongued 60-year-old women soften. Teenagers learn to talk a little less and to work a little harder. Shy and inhibited people learn to express their pride and love. Surely Montgomery was working from her own memory of a stage in life when the early stresses were over and later ones not yet felt.

For young children this 8-chapter section of the story holds out a tenable hope. Moving with Anne beyond the trammels of childhood, they foresee a time of self-respect, success, and community acceptance. For young adults the unblemished success reported in these 8 chapters reinforces a still-held faith: study hard, win a scholarship; be yourself, and a nice boy will offer friendship; be modest and dutiful and you will find a good job close to home. For adults, this dreamy unimpeded section is a charming reminder of the time of hope, a precise and poignant charting of short-held expectations. For the disappointed, reviving that threshold moment of openness is welcome.

Anne's unmitigated success makes a good story, even if "story" is taken in the sense of meaning "false." Reading this penultimate part of the book we soar with Anne in a waking dream, out-riding earlier storms of misapplied energies.

The flight ends, of course, with a shock. The death of Matthew, dearest of the older generation, as a point of plotting, caps all the earlier surprises. Montgomery has dropped clues about Marilla's impending troubles, with references to her headaches, the eye doctor, the vision blurs. But Matthew's death comes with less warning.

The story began with Matthew and the surprising change that came into his life with Anne; it moves toward its ending with the surprise of his death. For children the shock is salutary as well as powerful.

Aesthetically, the death of Matthew is the perfect denouement. In relation to the 8 chapters that preceded it, the ending is surprising not only for its placement (tragic trauma would normally precede glorious rewards) but also for its proportion: the descent to the shadows is very brief. At first reading, one is not conscious of the slightly asymmetric structure of the chapter organization (an 8-chapter entry, a 20-chapter unfolding, an 8-chapter apparent denouement, and a surprising 2-chapter reversal). Yet Montgomery's care in

shaping the book as a whole contributes subliminally to the pleasure of simply progressing from page to page. The shock of the tragic ending may be partly counterbalanced by the pleasure of the subtle imbalance in form.

The last chapter also packs in final plot surprises. Having suffered the shock of Matthew's death in one chapter, in the next and final one Anne grieves, suffers a second and third shock (Marilla's blindness and her financial ruin), renounces college, laughs at Mrs. Lynde, exchanges signals with Diana (left behind during the Queen's days), finds a job, makes up with Gilbert; then this flurrying dynamic chapter ends with a curiously static scene with Anne alone. She is seated, as we first saw her, but no longer rigid with expectation as she was at Bright River station. The story offers its last surprise in the concluding frame. Anne sits, as worthy Mrs. Rachel Lynde once sat, looking out her window. Anne dreams of a bend in the road; but *she* is now, we realize with a final shock, the new monitor, teacher in Avonlea, proponent of work and of worthy aspiration and community service. Mrs. Lynde has joined her, and she in effect has joined Mrs. Lynde.

We shut the book; we are back in our own world, a world very much like Avonlea. The fictional balloon has set us down on ordinary earth, though we still see its trailing ribbons of fancy and idealism.

Idealism — and maybe sentimentality? Critics have certainly emphasized the facile optimism of the plot taken as a whole, the constant turn upwards. We realize too the absence of any real evil. Marilla's coldness, Mrs. Lynde's rigidity, Mrs. Barry's narrowness, have all been defused. Even the malice of Josie Pye has been turned to comic effect, though her taunts and mockeries are a very real evil to a self-conscious adolescent. As Anne confronts each of the negative forces in her world, Montgomery softens the impact by humour. By implication, harshness, exclusivity, malice, are as funny as the bubbly little girl who downs them.

Montgomery has never been fully credited with the range of uses to which she puts humour in her plot. Funny events, funny turns to sombre events, funny language deflating the sentimentality which is part of the charm of the tale — tricks of humour ranging from witty word play to comic plot movements — these are among Montgomery's central strengths as a story teller.

Recognizing the humour does not of course put to rest the criticism

that the story is too upbeat to serve as an acceptable report on reality. Sentimentality and gentle humour make a story palatable to children, but may reveal an author incapable of reporting life in its full sad complexity. I believe L.M. Montgomery defended herself from these charges by embedding two other kinds of stories within the novel. With the first mini-story she seems to say, "I could write about the darker side if I chose to." With the second, she mocks, "You think this is sentimental? Let me show you what sentimental romance can really be like."

The first mini-story appears early, in "Anne's History," chapter 5. Drunkenness, meanness, unimaginative life, and undignified death have been part of Anne's experience before she came to the island. Anne flushes with embarrassment when Marilla brusquely asks for the truth about that early life; she swings the talk instead to "happy dreams," based on the memory of a single happy outing in a life of deprivation (59). Like her creator, Anne chooses to turn away from these sad and sordid realities by drawing an imaginative veil. The effect is realistic and defensive. A troubled child would indeed turn to fantasy dreaming. The little exchange also says in effect, "I know about these aspects of life, but that's not the kind of story I want to tell."

The second mini-story appears in chapter 26, "The Story Club Is Formed." Cultivating her imagination, Anne grows a crop of wild seedlings. The passions of Cordelia Montmorency, Geraldine Seymour, and Bertram de Vere should satisfy any reader intent on tragedy. But the reader, like Mr. and Mrs. Allan, is likely to laugh in the wrong places. Assigning to Anne the *nom-de-plume* of Rosamond Montmorency, Montgomery laughingly plays with the criticism of her own earliest writing as high-falutin and over-dependent on hectic plotting. The same chapter slips in a defence of the non-serious. Mrs. Allan, the minister's wife, tells the Story Club members they ought to aim at "doing some good in the world." "Mrs. Allan says that ought to be our object in everything. I do really try to make it my object but I forget so often when I'm having fun" (295). There is not much fun in the story of Cordelia and Rosamond. But in the rest of the book, laughter is everywhere.

The introduction of the Story Club is the mark of Montgomery's assurance as creator of fiction. The novel as a whole has offered rich pleasures: easy, syntagmatic movement from words to story; quick

and convincing action, well-paced, subtly structured and suitably framed; repetitions, echoes, variations, and accents, hardly noticed in the compulsion of the narrative drive, but creating a final sense of formal unity. Continuing skill in manipulating surprise and suspense, chapter by chapter, and section by section, thus provides effective access not only to the joy of a story, but also to a relishing of the story-teller's art. And then *Anne of Green Gables* lifts to a third level of story-pleasure. It turns in on its own genre, with the two embedded mini-fictions, stories within the story, stories essentially about story-telling.

A book like *Anne of Green Gables*, partly because it was written for a young audience, demonstrates the form and force of fiction clearly, and illuminates the whole function of language, in telling, writing, listening to and reading stories. Anyone can learn a great deal about narrative form by studying a child's book. Surface structures are simpler, the story drive stronger, the separation of materials into blocks tidier and clearer. The author who tells a story to children has to work hard against the shortness of their attention span. On the other hand, the writer of a children's book may feel released from some of the inhibitions that grip a narrator facing an adult audience. The patterns of dream may be released in clearer form when the dream-spinner fears no sophisticated or censorious dissection by her audience. Thus both the bones of story and the delicate texture of dreams appear more clearly in children's literature than in books consciously designed for adults. Maybe that is one reason the best of children's stories have so pleased the adults who sneak in and join the youthful listeners.

For adults who come not deviously but frankly to *Anne of Green Gables* there are further pleasures. The story offers intriguing variants on the archetypal story of initiation — the story of a solitary person, crossing a border, moving as a stranger in a strange land, encountering and countering entrenched and life-diminishing social customs and values. This is the pattern of the novels that L.M. Montgomery loved best. When she introduced variants on the *Bildungsroman* plot, drawn from her personal experiences and observations, she gave her readers the iconoclastic pleasure of reading a parody, adding a new version of the questing hero, in the person of a small red-headed, over-articulate orphan.

VERSIONS OF THE SELF

Anne Shirley is drawn from memories, reading, observation, and self-knowledge. She was created by a woman of thirty-one, a former school teacher, a resentful granddaughter forced to conform to an old woman's whims, a spinster longing for marriage and children, a Presbyterian, a devotee of Tennyson, a gardener, a fluent correspondent, a poet, an assistant postmaster in the Cavendish post office, a professional writer. Anne was created by a complex person — and yet with qualities emerging as her story unfolded on the pages of Montgomery's manuscript which even her complex creator could not herself understand or explain. "Is Anne a real person?" was a question often asked of L.M. Montgomery. In her Journal she gives a tantalizing answer: "I always answer 'no' with an odd reluctance and an uncomfortable feeling of not telling the truth" (*Selected Journals* II: 39). Anne seemed to have her own existence: "If I turned my head quickly should I not see her?" (40). The answer takes us to the mysterious core of creativity.

The passage in Montgomery's journal continues with a mention of one unmysterious source of the Anne story: an orphan girl was brought from an orphan asylum by Maud Montgomery's second cousin Pierce Macneill (who lived in a house at the cross-roads which was the original of Mrs. Lynde's). In her journal, she recalls making a note in 1895 of a possible story idea: "'Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent them'" (I: 330). She does not add any reference to another real adoption with which she was familiar: her elderly cousins Margaret and brother David Macneill, who lived in the house later recognized as Green Gables, adopted a little girl, the illegitimate daughter of one of their own nieces.

Nor does she note the impact on her imagination of all the stories of orphans which were a staple of children's books of the time: boys and girls making their own way in an indifferent or hostile world. The hero in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is a waif of the American South, in Kipling's *Kim* (1901) the abandoned child of an Irish soldier in India, in Gene Stratton-Porter's *Freckles* (1904) another Irish orphan in the lumber forests of the Northern States. Of the girls in this popular group of orphan stories, Dorothy in Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) is blown from Kansas into a new

world; in Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903) a child joins unsympathetic aunts in Maine. The long list of children riding alone into the world continues after Anne, with Mary in *The Secret Garden* (1911), Judy in *Daddy Long Legs* (1912), and the "glad girl" in *Pollyanna* (1913). In all these books an apparently unattractive or unwanted child finds a way to self-respect, acceptance, and success.

The most important source of Anne, however, is probably not anecdotal story ideas nor a literary tradition, but a deep personal experience. Many children feel alone and unwanted in the unsure years between babyhood and maturity. Maud Montgomery was in fact virtually an orphan, since her mother died of consumption less than two years after Maud was born, and her father moved away, eventually remarrying and settling out west in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Maud was raised by unsympathetic surrogate parents, her maternal grandparents Lucy and Alexander Macneill. Most of her aunts and uncles, busy with their own families and enterprises, were indifferent or critical. All her life Maud Montgomery remembered her childhood sense of alienation and insecurity. At the age of thirty-one, when she wrote *Anne of Green Gables*, she still felt poignantly an unsatisfied need to belong, to be loved and respected.

When Montgomery came to write her novel, she was distanced from the childhood phase of that experience by the passage of years. The mature woman could look with a comic eye on the things that seemed earthshaking to a child of limited experience. She could also see the laughable side of her own youthful commitment to art and fine language. She had learned to use language to create some emotional distance from her own intensities. Since the age of fifteen she had used her personal diary as a therapeutic outlet, teaching herself to recreate her feelings in words and thus to understand and to some extent control them. She had begun writing a childish diary at the age of nine, and from the age of fifteen had saved her journal, adding to it sometimes daily, sometimes after longish intervals. As time passed, she also continued to reread this record of her younger self, partly out of loneliness. Then, as her career developed as a writer of short stories for children, she realized that her childish journals were a great source of raw material. She reread the diaries and notebooks looking for story material. From this mixture of motives and needs came the lifelong habit of keeping in touch with her own past self. The combination of intensity, recollection, imagination, and craftsman-

ship lifts Anne from self-portraiture to universality.

The first description of Anne places her before us in terms of her physical clothing. Into the details of ugly colour and bad fit L.M. Montgomery packs her sense of the limited, constricted, drained quality of her own childhood. Then she adds the touch of hidden richness in the braids of half-hidden but thick and dramatically coloured hair:

A child of about eleven, garbed in a very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish grey wincey. She wore a faded brown sailor hat and beneath the hat, extending down her back, were two braids of very thick, decidedly red hair. (16)

The passage goes on to add the facial features that make Anne unique:

Her face was small, white and thin, also much freckled; her mouth was large and so were her eyes, that looked green in some lights and moods and grey in others. (16)

Anne will see many things with those sensitive eyes; she will say memorable things with that generous mouth.

The observing eyes, the commenting and creative speech are those of Anne's perceptive and articulate creator, but they are also potentially the features of every child. William Wordsworth in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" had written of such a child:

The growing Boy . . .
Beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy . . .
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly learned art . . .
And unto this he frames his song. (ll. 69-72; 92-94; 98)

Montgomery gives the idealized Wordsworthian child, the "seer blest," "eye among the blind," a realistic dress, and an idiosyncratic individuality. Anne comes, again like Wordsworth's child, "trailing clouds of glory." But she remains with the freckles of realism on her romantically white nose.

Anne will change in appearance. The carroty braids will turn into a handsome auburn coronet, the pale face will flush scarlet, the eyes will flash and be rinsed with tears, the tight child's dress will be replaced by the tucks and frills and shirrings of the delicate pale green confection of a Queen's girl. Yet one of Montgomery's greatest achievements is the way she conveys the sense of a continuity in Anne, the persistence of a personality.

She had a few classic models: the study of Maggie in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, the unfolding story of a female maturing in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the multiple stories of that threshold stage in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Montgomery's story proved to be inspiration and model for later tracings. The modern Canadian novelist Alice Munro, for example, acknowledges the influence of Montgomery in her own picture of Del in *Lives of Girls and Women*. But there is no book quite like *Anne of Green Gables*, no study of adolescence quite like Anne.

Anne of course is not the only character in the book, nor the only personality type that Montgomery understood. Montgomery was aware of the multiplicity of selves within her own person. She appeared to Cavendish as a proper woman, singing in the church choir, reading papers on Victorian authors to the members of a local literary society, obeying the dictates of her aunts and grandmother, acting every summer as hostess to her Uncle Leander and his demanding family. But her letters reveal another self. To Ephraim Weber in Alberta and George MacMillan in Scotland she wrote with wit and intelligence about her religious doubts, her speculations about sex, her responses to books far other than those in favour with the Cavendish Literary Society. Her journal reveals yet another self, meditative, rebellious, often deeply depressed, sometimes ardently responsive to beauties encountered on her solitary walks along Lover's Lane or down to the seashore, always nervous about her attraction to the men she encountered or remembered. The selves revealed in the letters and in the journal would have drawn hostility and mockery from her clan and community; she hid them.

In *Anne of Green Gables* all these selves are revealed, transmuted into fictional characters. Marilla is the angular spinster that Maud Montgomery feared she might become. The character of the old maid had been sentimentalized in British literature: the sweet pathos of the old ladies in Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853) had been revived in

Quality Street, a very popular play first produced in 1901, by J.M. Barrie, one of Montgomery's favourite authors. In American literature the figure of the old maid was less sentimentalized. Mark Twain satirized her sharply in Miss Watson, who tried to "civilize" Huck Finn, and Hawthorne emphasized her eccentricity, in Mistress Hibbins in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Hepzibah Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Marilla is less sweet than the old maids in British fiction, less strange than those in American novels. She is an interesting representative of a Canadian type of woman. Margaret Atwood in *Survival* delineates the archetype, Hagar Shipley in *The Stone Angel* personifies it. Marilla, like Hagar, retains her wit but has lost her sense of fun. A rigorous life combined with a rigid set of social and religious standards has worn down her sensibilities and narrowed her code of behaviour but not destroyed her tough humanity. She is a dynamic and developing character. To me, the war between her sharpness and her sentiment seems as Canadian as her speech: "Now don't be looking I-told-you-so, Matthew. That's bad enough in a woman, but it isn't to be endured in a man" (125), and "Go to sleep now like a good child" (74).

The relationship of Anne and Marilla remains central throughout the book. The exchanges between Anne and Marilla pose sentimentality and hyperbole against common sense and downright plain language: Anne to Marilla, "Oh, Marilla, you little know how wretched I am." Marilla to Anne: "I little know how you got into this fix, but I mean to find out" (301). Anne and Marilla are not just Montgomery's younger and older selves; they are also the two sides of the artist, one creative and inspired, the other constructive and controlling. Marilla encapsulates Montgomery's canny recognition of the folly of her own poetic sensibility. The author reveals her own inner conflicts when she creates confrontations and imagines dialogues between Anne and Marilla; she reveals her own inner stability and her sense of humour as she structures, frames, places, and develops these confrontations. Marilla needs Anne as much as Anne needs Marilla. It is interesting to note that the author reverses the nature of the two characters in the names she gives them. "Marilla" is a pretty-sounding name, carrying associations with the word "rill," a little brook, or à lilt of laughter; "Anne," as Marilla says, is "a real good plain sensible name" (35).

"What's in a name?" A great deal, as Anne explains to Matthew in

their first ride together. She would happily rename a Hepzibah Jenkins (whose name signifies a debt to Hawthorne) as "Rosalia de Vere." She herself would rather be called by the queenly tragic name "Cordelia"; she has already given up identifying herself by the half-male name "Geraldine." The characters created by L.M. Montgomery to surround Anne are drawn in part from her observations and memories of family and acquaintances. But the names the author assigns to them reveal some of her own unconscious attitudes and some aspects of the single self out of which she spun this range of imagined people.

The friendship with Diana is one of the strengths of the book. Montgomery's childhood playmates, her cousins Amanda Macneill and Pensie Macneill, and her Prince Albert friend Laura Pritchard, went into "Diana." But the Journal records Maud Montgomery's recurring withdrawal from friendships, first in Avonlea, then at Prince of Wales College and Dalhousie University, and later still in Leaskdale, Norval, and Toronto. Diana, I think, is much more a second self than any "other" could be to Montgomery. The name "Di-ana" suggests that Montgomery has created here a second anima or soul, an ideal "Anne." The name Diana ("dreadful heathenish," Matthew calls it) recalls the classical moon goddess, virginal and elusive: an ironic name for warm, romantic Diana; it is Anne who to the end maintains an atmosphere chaste and unattainable. Diana, blending beauty, kindness, and good humour, will grow into a woman happy in her domesticity. She is a hidden feminine self of both Anne and her spinsterish author.

The sound of "Anne" rings again in the name of that other, more commonplace friend, Jane Andrews. Jane's first name links the rock-bottom realism that underlies Anne's flights with Montgomery's favourite literary heroine, the plain outspoken orphan Jane Eyre. In plain Jane Andrews of Avonlea, Montgomery reveals the part of her own personality which was the antithesis of divine, heathenish, and romantic.

Prissy Andrews, courted by the schoolmaster under the eyes of the other students, recalls Maud Montgomery's experiences in her year of schooling out west in Prince Albert. The unattractive Mr. Mustard, an ineffectual teacher, was an unwelcome suitor. He ended the school year by proposing to sixteen-year-old Maud Montgomery. Mr. Mustard's student turned him down with scorn; Prissy Andrews shows

a more conventional readiness to hear Mr. Phillips's suit. She is a prim and pretty version of school-girl Anne and of Anne's erstwhile schoolgirl creator.

I hear a final echo of "Anne" in "Allan." Mr. and Mrs. Allan were created at the time Cavendish Presbyterians had just undergone a search for a new minister. Cavendish found its new incumbent in the Reverend Ewan Macdonald, who appeared to the community, like Mr. Allan, as a "frank, cheerful young man" (237). Montgomery's journal tells us she wrote the first paragraph of *Anne of Green Gables* on the day that Ewan Macdonald first lingered for a long chat when he came to the Macneill farm post-office to pick up his mail. Mrs. Allan, bright, gentle, dimpled, and a good housekeeper, was an idealized version of what L.M. Montgomery might well become — a good mistress of the manse, if she should marry the new minister. Mrs. Allan emerges for Anne as a super-ego, a socially acceptable figure representing the ideal side of convention and conformity.

A less acceptable model of conformity is Mrs. Lynde. The name "Lynde" conflates the names "Laird" and "Wyand" — farming and fishing families who were the Macneills' near neighbours in Cavendish. Into Mrs. Lynde, Montgomery condenses all the common sense and competence of her neighbours, and her own sense of the narrowness of that Cavendish conformity. Yet Miss Stacy, the teacher who "stays," as Anne will do, to help her Avonlea pupils, presents an idealization of Montgomery's own decision to stay with her Cavendish dependents and conform to community expectations.

One final point about the naming of characters concerns the girls and women whose names derive from men's names: Geraldine, Aunt Josephine, and Josie Pye. Anne exercises a curious downward thrust against these characters: Anne and Diana leap into bed on top of Aunt Josephine; Cordelia pushes Geraldine off the bridge; Anne climbs the ridge pole and falls to triumph over the mean and taunting Josie Pye. Josie displays characteristics generally considered male by Cavendish convention: competitiveness, antagonistic confrontation, pugnacity. These are qualities that Montgomery repressed in her outward persona. But she shared Josie's power drive. Competitiveness and ambition probably contributed to her rejection of Edwin Simpson, the patronizing young Baptist minister to whom she was briefly engaged, and also of Herman Leard, whom she loved but saw as impeding her intellectual and professional potential. Sharp-

tongued jealous Josie represents a dark part of her own nature which Montgomery might wish to subdue. Maud Montgomery had a very dark streak in her own nature, and she had known some hated and frightening people; but in *Anne of Green Gables* she concealed the shadow.

A character compounded purely of goodness is Matthew. Consistently loving and supportive, Matthew is the kind of adult male that Montgomery herself had not known in her childhood. Her father was away and remarried, her grandfather was stern and demanding and critical; her admirers were either egocentric like Edwin Simpson, limited like Herman Leard, or phlegmatic like Ewan Macdonald. Matthew arises not from memory or acquaintanceship but from desire. She could still distance herself enough to see Matthew as ridiculous, to create for him some of the great comic scenes in the book: Matthew skulking behind the wood box, shoe-horn in hand, noticing dimly that Anne somehow looked different from other girls; Matthew at the general store, confronting the dashing young lady clerk; Matthew terrified of everything feminine, sheepishly proffering the glossy dress with its "two beautiful puffs divided by rows of shirring and bows of brown silk ribbon" (280).

The central romantic male figure of course is Gilbert Blythe. Gilbert, briefly connected with Ruby Gillis, and then inexorably attracted to red-headed Anne, has been a very real person to many generations of readers. To others, he seems drained of colour, a type rather than a person. A psychologist (especially a male psychologist) might see Gilbert, rational, controlled, steady, as representing the male side of Montgomery's personality. He is her "animus," to use the term popularized by Carl Jung. A Freudian might use the term "ego," to distinguish Gilbert from the "libido" personified in red-haired Anne. A neuropsychologist might refer to the "left side of the brain," and study Gilbert as an artist's manifestation of her own logical constructive qualities, differing from those of the more imaginative "right side."

All these hypotheses reinforce the impression of something abstract about Gilbert. He is an idealized young male, like the lad Montgomery created in her poem "A Country Boy." This poem was written in Lower Bedeque in 1897, the year she herself loved, and rejected the young farmer Herman Leard. The poem lists the jollities of country life — fishing, working with the farm animals, hunting for berries and

nuts, coasting, skating under the Northern lights (Bolger, *The Years before "Anne"* 175). The "Canadian content" in this poem carries over to the general characterization of Gilbert. Gilbert's gentle courtesy, a quality he shares with Matthew Cuthbert, marks his difference from the boys in English and American stories. Unlike the girl-shy chaps in English school yarns, and the girl-scorning fellows in American western adventures, Gilbert is a product of Canadian co-education, and Prince Edward Island sociability. He has a touch of Scottish sentiment drawn from the Scottish literary heritage of Burns and Barrie.

L.M. Montgomery chats in her early journal about the boys who were her friends, all of them partly recreated in Gilbert: Nathan Lockhart, the clever fellow who was her rival in early school days; Will Pritchard, the blithe lad out west who shifted from friendly admiration into a declaration of love; the Laird boys, who lived next door in Cavendish and continued to make life more comfortable for their old school-mate after school days were over. Interestingly, the youngest Laird boy, Austin, who was the bane of Maud Montgomery's existence in her last year of school, had a wild crop of red hair. Maud teased him mercilessly at school — a reality effectively inverted in the fictional boy-girl world of Avonlea. (Incidentally Austin Laird's father, according to local gossip, had wanted to marry Maud's mother: a base for the story of lost love told by Marilla.)

When Montgomery appropriated that red hair for her imaginary orphan girl, she tapped a deep vein of suggestion: a hint of the supernatural. In olden days red-headed women were prime targets for witch hunts; in all times, artistic magic holds a mysterious power. The hint of witchcraft is properly associated not only with Anne but also with the creative process by which Montgomery created her and her fellow beings.

There is indeed something inexplicable in character creation. We can catalogue the sources, the experiences, the remembered literary passages which flooded into Montgomery's mind like a waking dream as she chose a name, created a speech pattern, selected a setting and physical features for her character — the pointed chin, the grey eyes — but we cannot fully explain Anne's hold over us.

We can postulate that a complex author, through openness to her own personal knot of memories, might well tap into some general sense of the structure of the self: Jungian anima or soul; animus or

sexually opposite central being; shadow or dark self, the worst possibility; self within the self, the hidden dominant. Central characters in *Anne of Green Gables*, as we have seen, adumbrate this range of components.

Setting speculation and research aside, if we return to a reading of the book itself we find that Anne escapes dissection. Anne is engaging at every stage of her life, an amusing child, a tempestuous teenager, a witty and attractive young woman. Her essential quality is consistent from stage to stage: like the Old Testament prophets and the staunch Presbyterians who so much admired them, she will always “dare to have a purpose firm [and] dare to make it known” (*The Book of Praise* 459). As the successful creation of an accomplished artist she engages our attention and interest, bringing us to recognize our own willing suspension of disbelief, our close involvement not only with the puzzle of a personality, but also with the mystery of aesthetic composition. We watch her author delineate her, bring her to fictional life, carry her from first inception through careful narrative to a final sense of wholeness, rightness, conviction.

Volatile yet always the same, with evanescent beauty and unforgettable eloquence, she remains as something more than a distillation of one woman’s experience, or a chance perception of truths about the complex parts of every self. Montgomery gave her own imagination scope when she allowed Anne to become part of her life and put the result on paper.

Thanks to imagination, for each reader a second miracle occurs: the black marks on the page blur and disappear, and Anne appears. Catalyzed by the creator’s act, she emerges for each reader as an emanation of memories, desires, and fears. There is psychological therapy in the reading of a book that helps externalize hidden parts and conflicting parts of the self. There is also a strange excitement in finding imagined friends as real as the people who touch us in the world of flesh.

Finally, Montgomery gives Anne her own great gift, the key to the kingdom of language. Anne is enraptured with words. She has literary ambitions. Anne’s elevated rhetoric encourages others to release their own love of words and also to curb and discipline that love.

Anne, like most of us, does not achieve her literary ambition. L.M. Montgomery does. She reveals the daring of that ambition when she

gives her real home town the fictional name "Avonlea." Avonlea sounds like Cavendish, of course, and the sound of the word is pleasant. But "Avonlea" also implies that Montgomery sees her work as lying somewhere in the fields near Avon — the river by which Shakespeare lived as a young man. Anne's author, playing the game of names — place names this time — implies that she is ready, like the young Shakespeare, to turn her real world to mythic purposes.

TO THE ISLAND OF IMAGINATION

In *Anne of Green Gables*, L.M. Montgomery built an imagined world out of the fields and ponds and paths of Prince Edward Island. There is a real Prince Edward Island, crescent-shaped, where red roads lead to the white sands of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the purple-blue mysteries of the sea.

Maud Montgomery travelled those roads often. She knew the real Prince Edward Island, photographed it with enthusiasm, and recorded its details in hundreds of descriptive poems that bore titles such as "Stars through the Pines," "Buttercups," "Winter Dusk in the Firs," "Golden Rod," and "The New Moon." Most of the poems are like simple snap-shots, fixing an impression of regional detail in a few lines, picturing the world "out there," as, for example, in "When Autumn Comes":

Out there the misty sea laps glad on crisp and windy sands;
Out there the smoke-blue asters blow on breezy meadow lands;
Out there the joyous marigolds in marsh and swamp are bright —
Despite the breath of chilly morn and nip of frosty night
(*Poetry* 31)

This was published in *Zion's Herald* in September 1906.

The cadence and stance in this descriptive poem are Tennysonian, echoing his lines from "Locksley Hall": "In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove; / In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love" (ll. 19–20). L.M. Montgomery had been taught in school to admire and imitate Tennyson's careful imaging of natural beauty. It was easy for her to fit lines from such a poem as "The Lady of Shalott" to scenes in her own environment.

Looking at the brook that ran through the Macneill farm she could remember and adapt phrases like Tennyson's "Willows whiten, aspens quiver, / Little breezes dusk and shiver / Through the wave that runs forever / By the island in the river" (ll. 10-13). As she wrote her own poetry, Tennysonian phrases helped fix the real island in her imagination.

Around this time Montgomery recorded in her journal innumerable walks through Lover's Lane, down past the old Cavendish school house, and beyond the reflecting waters of Clark's Pond, to observe sunset on the sea shore. "This evening I spent in my dark room developing some pictures," she notes in her journal on 14 November 1904. "One mild grey day last week," she continues, "I took my camera and went to the woods. I wanted some pictures of the year asleep and I got them — still pasture corners, a brook under the spruces, birches all leafless and white limbed" (*Selected Journals* 1: 296).

She was leading a lonely, intense life, her sensibilities concentrated, like Henry David Thoreau's in his time at Walden Pond, on the minutiae of nature. Thoreau's mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said of the younger mystic, "Every fact lay in glory in his mind" (*Complete Essays* 906). The same may be said of Montgomery. Natural details lay in the "dark room" of her mind, accruing significance. As Emerson also wrote, "The beauty of nature re-forms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creations" (13). Montgomery, after years of intense observation of the real world impinging on her senses, the flowers, rivers, bridges, sunsets, lanes, and fields of Prince Edward Island, recreated the island in words.

Montgomery gives the child Anne some of her own intensity of response to the world "out there." Like her creator, Anne pulls this world into her own mind by finding names for the sights she sees: "the White Way of Delight," "the Lake of Shining Waters," "the Snow Queen." Each name adds to the snapshot description a verbal image.

An "image" means primarily a photographic reproduction of the thing observed. But "image" is also a term for a literary device, a phrase that says "this is like that," linking one impression in the mind with another. Like Thoreau, Montgomery perceived correspondences between certain elements in the environment and aspects of human life. For example, her pond, like Thoreau's, stimulates the

exercise of "imaging" in both senses. She describes it as the first sight observed by Anne on approaching Avonlea:

They had driven over the crest of a hill. Below them was a pond, looking almost like a river so long and winding was it. A bridge spanned it midway and from there to its lower end, where an amber-hued belt of sand-hills shut it from the dark blue gulf beyond, the water was a glory of many shifting hues — the most spiritual shadings of crocus and rose and ethereal green, with other elusive tintings for which no name has ever been found. Above the bridge the pond ran up into the fringing groves of fir and maple and lay all darkly translucent in their wavering shadows. Here and there a wild plum leaned out from the bank like a white-clad girl tiptoeing to her own reflection. From the marsh at the head of the pond came the clear, mournfully-sweet chorus of the frogs. (27-28)

The passage records specific details: firs, maples, marsh, frogs. It also offers one "image" in the sense of simile: a wild fruit tree in its blossoming phase is like a hesitant narcissistic girl. The whole passage in context is an extended image of Anne herself. Like the first description of Anne in her tight ugly clothes waiting at Bright River station, this passage emphasizes a walled-in quality. The pond is "spanned," belted by sand, "shut in." Yet a sequence of adjectives — "spiritual," "ethereal," "elusive," "wild" — all link the pond with other of Anne's qualities, which the reader has discovered since that first rigid appearance. The emphasis on shifting colours recalls the changing colour of Anne's eyes. Montgomery therefore leads us to see an extended and subtle correspondence when she embeds the image of the wild-plum girl, no longer in yellowish grey wincey, but already leaning toward a pretty white reflection in the translucent shadows of the pond at Avonlea. As for the frogs, they remind us again of Thoreau, and his insistent registering of all natural details, even the unromantic "trump" of the bull-frog.

Montgomery's descriptions do what Thoreau's did: they awaken the reader, sharpen the power to see and hear, to become a "seer," a divining rod that finds and releases deep springs in the world and the self. Montgomery also wields Thoreau's power to use humour for a return to the ordinary world. Thoreau ends a rhapsody on the cold

reflecting Walden pond by noting that it's also good for keeping butter cool; Montgomery's Matthew pulls us back from the "thrill" of Anne's high epiphany of wonder to a "thrill" of his own, induced by white grubs in a cucumber bed.

It is easy to enjoy this experience of sharpened response to the kind of scenes described in the novel, because Montgomery, like Thoreau, chose conventional widely familiar scenic details: a pond, a sunset, a blossoming tree. The critic Northrop Frye calls these significant commonplaces "archetypes." Other archetypal elements in her repertoire include lilies and peonies; red roads and ferny paths; green roofs and snow. They create a rich emotional subtext beneath the surface story, a connotative code to be deciphered half-consciously.

Montgomery like most writers chooses details from her own farm, village, and region, as well as from her literary experience. Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott" furnishes the context against which lilies have special significance. Anne picks lilies several times in the book, and wreathes her hair in lilies midway through the tempestuous first conflict with Gilbert. The "Lily Maid" chapter perhaps adds something of the Christian association of the lily with death and resurrection to the romantic melancholy of Tennyson's poem, contributing to the release of nervous intensity through parody and reductive farce.

The thorny white rose bush, brought by Matthew's mother from Scotland, recalls another favourite book, Ian MacLaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. L.M. Montgomery gave a paper on MacLaren when she was at college (*Selected Journals* 1: 148). Writing her own novel she drew associative force from that sentimental story of homely life, which lingers over the death of a dear parent.

Some details chosen reflect a personal phobia. Bridges, for instance. Anne confesses to a fear of crossing bridges, a phobia her author also admitted to. The phobia seems to be invoked in the "Lily Maid" chapter, and certainly lurks behind the manic scene when Cordelia pushes Geraldine off a bridge.

Some such personal quirk perhaps explains the use of pink and yellow as carrying a suggestion of distaste. These colours add a sour undertone to the treatment of some apparently pleasant scenes and people. The unpleasant association is established early. Anne, chided for twining wild roses and buttercups around her Sunday-go-to-meeting hat, responds firmly, "Oh, I know pink and yellow aren't

becoming to me" (117). Soon she will grind away the pink and gold heart proffered by Gilbert. Finally, after Matthew dies, when Anne sits with Marilla by a door propped open by a big pink conch shell and puts yellow honeysuckle in her hair we feel uneasy; unease intensifies when she settles with Marilla and Mrs. Lynde at that door, by a row of tall pink and yellow hollyhocks. Perhaps such a sequence is unintentional — as if the artist simply picked up a bit of pigment on her brush, and flicked it onto the canvas. The typescript of the novel (now held in Charlottetown, at the Confederation Centre) shows that many touches of detail were carefully controlled. On the first page, for instance, the author inserted into the description of the bushes that grow in Mrs. Lynde's hollow a handwritten addition: "and ladies' eardrops" (1). This revision names a flower that I myself do not know, but I get from that detail, so carefully inserted, an important suggestion that female fashion and elegance also grow in the garden at the crossroads of Cavendish — and I hear a sly dig at the kind of female who hears everything there is to hear about the community.

Sometimes the landscape details are regional or national. Allusions to lilies, white roses, birches, and white blossoming trees are drawn from Prince Edward Island's orchards and the carefully tended landscape that long ago earned the province the epithet "Garden of the Gulf." Montgomery combines the white provincial flowers with the all-Canadian phenomenon of snow, and links all these allusions to the whiteness of pearls and of Anne's skin for a dominant colour emphasis. As a good Canadian, Montgomery accepts crisp winter snow as a facilitator of social interaction, both in the sleigh ride Diana and Anne take along the bright frosty shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and also in Anne's skimming haste across snowy fields to save Minnie May.

All the allusions to white beauty in nature fuse in a memorable description of snow in chapter 25:

The firs in the Haunted Wood were all feathery and wonderful; the birches and wild cherry-trees were outlined in pearl; the ploughed fields were stretches of snowy dimples. (279)

The passage links birches and pearls, pearls and the memory of blossoms implied in the wild cherry-tree. But the climax comes in

the reference to dimples. What a great final touch! Pearls of course add snowy value to the trees; but it is that word "dimples," with all we remember about Anne's longing for dimples, that tells us how wonderful snow can be.

When L.M. Montgomery drew natural details from her own world into her novel she used them as Thoreau did, in chains of allusions carrying associative force. Thoreau, however, was not the only American Transcendentalist admired by L.M. Montgomery. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* was a favourite book, read many times and always with deep impact. In it, Hawthorne too uses natural colours with rich symbolic suggestiveness: the white rose bush that grows at the prison door; the green weeds that a passionate child twines around her quiet mother's dress; the scarlet and gold glory of the mark of that woman's passion. As a fiction-writer, rather than an autobiographical essayist like Thoreau, Hawthorne weaves these allusions into a sequence that adds depth to his plot and subtlety to his characterization. Colours in *Anne of Green Gables*, as they recur and change, similarly move the story forward with symbolic suggestiveness.

There is a careful manipulation of the series of allusions to roses, from the "great rose" of the cathedral window suggested by the play of light during Anne's first ride with Matthew, through the "little white house rose" fastened behind her ear when she chooses to wear Matthew's pearl beads at the concert performance, to the little white Scotch rose-bush Anne brings to Matthew's grave.

Montgomery plays white and red together when Anne and Diana go along the Birch Path toward the school and the first tempestuous schoolroom scene with Gilbert. They walk by "wild lilies-of-the-valley and scarlet tufts of pigeon berries" (149). Many shades of red glow throughout this book with its red-headed protagonist, but this is one of a very few uses of the word "scarlet."

Montgomery presents the brilliance of "royal crimson" maples and wild cherry-trees, "dark red and bronzy green," at the beginning of the chapter when Diana comes to her Dionysian tea party (168). The richest of reds cluster round Diana. Her garden, in chapter 12, ribboned with moist red paths, begins with the glow of "rosy bleeding-hearts and great splendid crimson peonies" and ends with "scarlet lightning that shot its fiery lances over prim white musk-flowers" (121). The feast Diana enjoys in chapter 16 is also riotously red:

cherry preserves, Red Sweetings, not to mention raspberry cordial (or currant wine). A feast better not served in the rose-bud tea-set!

Playing with words that imply red, Montgomery tells us that Anne writes romances as "Rosamund Montmorency" — but vows to give up romancing — and earns access to "Redmond" University — but relinquishes the dream of higher education. The chapter in which Anne changes her hair colour, inadvertently, from red to green begins with "crimson-budded maples around a mirror-like wood-pool" (297) — a fine flashback to the early identification of pond = mirror = eyes. The last colour reference is to Anne's "scarlet" cheeks as she holds out her hand to Gilbert.

Green, the colour complementary to red, appears in ferns and leaves, pretty clothes, and the comforting Gables of home. But a green dye distorts Anne's natural flame. Montgomery plays with colour transformations often: in the Birch path, "the light came down sifted through so many emerald screens that it was as flawless as the heart of a diamond" (149).

The last colour note in the book that relates to nature is neither green nor red nor white. It is purple, the purple of a misty sea (427). Feminists, who claim the colour purple as their own, may well note the connection with the ocean, archetype of creativity and motherhood. What flick of association is implied in this recall of the purple of Marilla's amethyst, the brooch that Anne was accused of stealing, the brooch that contained a braid of Marilla's mother's hair, the brooch that first called forth Anne's imagination for a wrong cause?

Finally, the flash of colour in jewels — amethyst, emerald, diamond, ruby — leads us to notice the play of allusions to light. Here again there is a connection with Hawthorne's symbolic technique in *The Scarlet Letter*. But where the special effects of light are ominous in *The Scarlet Letter*, they are usually benign in *Anne of Green Gables*. After Anne and Matthew first ride together toward a shining sunset, they move through twilight when the pond glows in gentler colours, and approach Green Gables where "in the stainless southwest sky, a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise" (30).

Another swing through part of the solar cycle deepens later meanings. Big stars shine on the sparkling winter night when Anne leaves Green Gables to hasten with Diana "to the rescue" (chapter 18). In the next chapter the girls ride together through a snowy night to a

concert past the splendid sunset colours of sea and sky. Spring comes in the next chapter:

Spring had come once more to Green Gables — the beautiful, capricious, reluctant Canadian spring, lingering along through April and May in a succession of sweet, fresh, chilly days, with pink sunsets and miracles of resurrection and growth. The maples in Lover's Lane were red-budded and little curly ferns pushed up around the Dryad's Bubble. Away up in the barrens, behind Mr. Silas Sloane's place, the Mayflowers blossomed out, pink and white stars of sweetness under their brown leaves. (224)

In the first two sentences, the sequence of colours from pink to red and the sequence of growth from buds to ferns justify the emphasis on "resurrection and growth." The third sentence however moves on to "the barrens" and to "brown leaves." The image of Mayflowers blossoming as stars reaffirms restoration and light. The apocryphal vision is reduced by the homely allusion to Mr. Silas Sloane; and the slip from pink sunsets to pink and white stars hints at the softening effect which will in fact characterize the total movement of colour and light allusions in the book as a whole.

The brief final allusion to the pond, the Lake of Shining Waters, in the last pages of the book, shows this diminuendo. "The west was a glory of soft mingled hues, and the pond reflected them all in still softer shadings" (427). Matthew is gone, and childhood is over. Yet Tennysonian echoes sound here for a last time, with the suggestion of splendour falling, of sunset and evening star. The result is an intertextual evocation of belief that "Our echoes roll from soul to soul / And grow forever and forever" ("The Splendour Falls," ll. 15-16) — a final affirmation of the permanence of Matthew's loving influence.

Anne has moved through the natural world, realizing it by naming each scene "out there" as it impinged on her consciousness. Montgomery, dissolving herself in the identity of narrator, does more than react to single scenes. She reflects the real world as a succession of scenes, a process. In other words, Montgomery moves beyond still photography. She works for accuracy of single frames, then releases a flow of related images, shifting slightly each time so that the shapes and colours move and change in the reader's inner eye. Ultimately

her technique differs from Hawthorne's: she invents a narrative method resembling the "moving pictures" of cinematography.

Moving pictures were not of course widely available in 1905 when Montgomery was working out her own technique of filming her island. There had been experiments with cinematography since the 1880s, but celluloid film was not invented until 1890. In 1894-95 three inventors, one in Paris, one in Washington, and one in London, simultaneously came up with apparatus for recording and projecting a series of pictures in a succession so rapid as to create an illusion of movement. The search for such a device was inevitable, given the tone of the times. In the period of *Anne of Green Gables*, contemporary physics of atomic dance discounted the old static Newtonianism; a philosophy of "becoming" rather than "being" concentrated on process; and a technology (as in Ford's assembly line) was being devised, derived from atomizing production movements.

Writers at the same time were recording other kinds of process. Tiny shifts in social situations, tiny ripples in the stream of consciousness were delineated in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (1904) and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). Montgomery moved restlessly around Cavendish during the time she was composing *Anne of Green Gables*, and recorded in her journal little changes in the community and in her own response to it. In the novel, characters seem to be in perpetual motion, and emotions shift and change like the seasons.

Folk come and go along the paths and lanes, cross the bridges, row on the pond, stroll home from church, drive to concerts, and go to tea parties. The novel is full of directional signals, notes of motion. It is like a film scenario, telling us when to follow from a distance, when to zoom in on the minutiae of flower and play of light, reflection on the pond water, dimple in the snow.

The cinematic device of moving eye and superimposed images adds a final power to Montgomery's accurate still shots of the realities of her natural world. The reader's mind works in the same way, screening both the movements of people and the shifts in scenery. Imagination screens the first sunset scene, holds it in an after image until the end of the book creates softer shadings on that still remembered pond. We pan along the shore road to White Sands until we know the way into and out of Avonlea.

The thousands of tourists who travel physically to the real Prince Edward Island in order to renew their sense of the imagined one

repeat the movement of the book. They drive from Charlottetown northward towards the gulf; turn left at the Cavendish crossroads towards Green Gables, Diana's house, the Hall, the school site, the church, the graveyard. Because L.M. Montgomery kept such detailed journals, tourists now also know enough to pause on the right-hand side of the road as they travel down toward the sea. They visit the empty space where the old Macneill farmhouse once stood. They remember that there, on the right side of the road, using the right side of the brain, Lucy Maud Montgomery watched and created her island world.

A tourist can still see the "Lake of Shining Waters" on Prince Edward Island. After reading the novel, however, the reader as mental traveller can also see this pond, and every pond, with new sensitivity, remembering the suggestive sequence of Montgomery's evocative descriptions. The white of the sand and of the snow that blows so cruelly in winter, piling up to windows and obliterating fences, links with Matthew's gift of pearls, with the small Scottish rose on Matthew's grave, the rose of death and memory. The green of the gables and of the network of spring crops is the green of Anne's optimistic bid for beauty and the clothing power of young optimism; and the blue of summer skies, intensified in the reflecting pond, like Anne's imagination is a "Lake of Shining Waters." The puzzling red of roads becomes the red of Anne's changing femininity, and the riotous red of Diana's unexpected liberation.

CIRCLES OF GIRLHOOD

Hawthorne and Emerson, shielded by devoted wives, each wrote in a quiet study; Thoreau, unmarried, wrote when and where he pleased. L.M. Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables* at a corner of the kitchen table, in intervals between running the post office, tending a sick grandmother, and responding to calls from the church and other village societies. Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, of course, also wrote in the corners and among the duties assigned to them by a patriarchy — so there is no absolute proof that lacking "a room of one's own" inevitably restricts creative writing. Indeed, Virginia Woolf's call for that inviolable room may be balanced by Edna St. Vincent Millay's defence of domestic constraints: "I guess

I'll be locked into / As much as I'm locked out of!" ("The Prisoner," *A Few Figs from Thistles* 14).

Montgomery's paradoxical position as woman writer builds into a deep ambivalence about the roles, pleasures, and responsibilities of girls and women. In *Anne of Green Gables* she sends conflicting signals about careers and romance, domestic life and social responsibility. Her assessment of male/female relations is ambiguous. Her focus on gender-based pressures in psyche and society, however, is clear.

Plot complexity, powerful characterization, and the creation of a richly suggestive natural background almost obscure the first simple germ of the story of *Anne of Green Gables*: "Elderly couple apply . . . for a boy. By mistake, a girl is sent." This little news item with its implications about the relative value of boys and girls caught Montgomery's eye in 1895. Ten years later she decided "this would do" for a serial story in a Sunday school paper. Then the girl who came by mistake took over Montgomery's imagination until her story filled a book.

The girl in the story of course stays and proves as useful as any boy can be. Although she is not able to save Matthew by helping with the heavy farm work, she does manage domestic duties — after comic intervals — does dishes, sews patchwork, sets the table, prepares meals. She makes Marilla smile and bend into gentleness; she brings Matthew out of his shyness and terror of women.

Anne at Queen's College achieves status in the traditionally male sphere of scholarship. The point of boy/girl equality is emphasized in chapter 36, "The Glory and the Dream." The boys carry Gilbert on their shoulders; the girls congratulate Anne. "Her shoulders were thumped and her hands shaken vigorously" (401). Matthew reiterates the point at the end of the chapter: "Well now, I guess it wasn't a boy that took the Avery scholarship, was it? It was a girl — my girl — my girl that I'm proud of" (407).

At the end Anne takes on the public role of teacher, and the private one of domestic companion, both in the "proper sphere" of women. She has proved how useful a girl sent "in mistake" could be, to the satisfaction of many generations of readers.

Anne of Green Gables has been categorized as "a girl's book." Although feminists may worry about the way it finally measures a girl's "usefulness," it is a pre-eminent "girl's book" in the sense of

being accessible to female readers. It tells the story of growing up in terms that girls relate to intensely. Like all myths it ritualizes experience, but it is different from other myths because it mythologizes from a position within a woman's body.

Anne's story draws its dominant symbols from female physiological forms and functions. Consequently it offers an alternative to the story of the questing hero usually accepted as a universal. That "universal" myth, as discriminated by Joseph Campbell in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, follows not a human maturing, but a male human maturing. It is presented in a code that males can identify with. We remember the meaningful symbols in male authors' stories, the stories so often repeated to the whole community as if male symbols would work equally well for female listeners. The hero draws a sword from its sheath, he flourishes his sword, runs it through another's body, drops it, returns it to its sheath, or to a stone, or to the mere. Even the beamish boy in the nonsensical "Jabberwocky" of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* has a sword that goes snicker-snack.

A mere girl can't get the same sense of phallic power that those sword flourishes give to boys. But in the hieroglyphs that mark the pages of *Anne*, a girl finds something else. Perhaps L.M. Montgomery didn't herself fully bring what she was doing to the light of consciousness, yet she uses a code that touches deep springs in girls and women. This code consists of circles, cups, bowls, boats, beds. Montgomery tells the story of growing up in terms of wanting and getting puff sleeves, floating in a boat torn by a sharp stake, accepting a silver bracelet or a string of pearl beads, jumping into bed with a Diana, or lying among pillows after the bottle sold by a mysterious stranger has released an embarrassing flood of colour.

Moments of initiation in this girl's book involve not swords but circular jewels. Marilla's brooch, an oval in which a circle of amethysts surround a braid of her mother's hair, is central in a major exchange between the young Anne and the older woman. When, from another old lady, Miss Josephine Barry, Anne receives a pair of slippers "with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles" (282), Diana receives a silver bracelet. Jewelled circles mark important moments in Anne's relation to Matthew also. The "bangle bracelets that glittered and rattled and tinkled" on the girl in the store nearly deflect his intention to give Anne the stuff that will turn her into stylish beauty (274); later he gives Anne a string of pearl

beads to be tied around her "slim milk-white throat" (372).

These recurring jewelled circles image not only Anne's developing femininity but also her growing sense of identity and of relationship. At each of the initiatory moments, Anne repeats a ritual phrase: "I'm Anne of Green Gables," she says, first to Marilla, then to Miss Barry, and finally to Diana and the other young women, when she renounces the jewels of the outside world, "I'm quite content to be Anne of Green Gables, with my string of pearl beads" (382).

The circular bracelets, brooches, and beads are examples of a female geometry that recurs in the related spherical pattern of puffed sleeves. Every crude drawing of a female figure features two circles high on the body — breasts, of course, a term not used by a woman as modest or as inhibited by contemporary literary conventions as L.M. Montgomery. Even the men in the Victorian novels she loved so much never mention breasts directly, though there are references to curve of the neck, white shoulders, fullness of figure, and so on. Push those circles out to the side of the body, and see what the evasive author has in mind, deep in mind, when she imagines all the fuss about puffed sleeves. Marilla refuses to let Anne have them. Matthew tries to provide them but is too shy to do more than act in the background. Mrs. Lynde calmly buys the material and makes up the dress — with wonderful puffs. Mrs. Allan, the minister's wife, has "elbow sleeves" — fashionable puffs (235). Miss Stacy, model of independent womanhood, who frees Anne's mind and sets up the urge to excel, is the first lady teacher in Avonlea (reminding us of how recently this profession ceased to be an all-male preserve: Anne will have no male teachers at Queen's, or at Redmond, in Kingsport); yet Miss Stacy begins the breach in male dominance gently, quietly, without militarism. Furthermore, "she dresses beautifully and her sleeve puffs are bigger than anybody else's in Avonlea" (262).

In the later part of the book, once Anne has passed the first stage of puberty, puff sleeves are not mentioned. Boats are, however, to turn to another female symbol. Remember the Lily Maid's boat, the barge, its bottom pierced by an embedded stake. Remember how Anne aged fifteen now, clings to the rough pile. Bedraggled and embarrassed, she has to accept help from Gilbert, the boy in Harmon Andrews's boat.

Another part of girls' experience is caught in allusions to cups and bowls, culminating in the image of sunset light, "rimmed" with

snowy hills and dark blue water, as “a huge bowl of pearl and sapphire brimmed with wine and fire” (213). “Rimmed” and “brimmed”: the incantatory suggestion of containment and overflow is completed in the crimson conclusion, in “wine and fire.” These are archetypes wielding great power for girls, symbols connected with the womb and menstruation. Last of the female hieroglyphs is the bed. “Going to bed” is a euphemism for intercourse, “brought to bed” an archaism for birth. For Anne, deep “embedded” meanings impinge on three very intense moments of growth. Anne at the age of eleven, coming into relationship with the adult Marilla, “dive[s] down into invisibility” in the high old-fashioned bed (40). Other bedtime scenes with Marilla re-emphasize the whiteness of the room and the dream of gorgeous silken cushions.

On Diana’s thirteenth birthday, another bed scene climaxes chapter 19, “Concert, Catastrophe, Confession.” Concert: Anne and Diana, crowded into a sleigh “among straw and furry robes,” see on the shore of the Gulf that sunset brimming with wine and fire (213). Later, by a warm fire at Diana’s house they undress, fly together down the hall and bound into bed. Catastrophe: something moves beneath them. Confession: Anne’s eyes, “brimmed up with a mixture of desperate courage and shrinking terror,” confront those of Miss Josephine, which are snapping through gold-rimmed glasses as the old lady sits fiercely by the fire (220). Outcome: discovery of a kindred spirit and an invitation to a grander bed when Anne comes to the city. It’s a funny story and a surprisingly memorable one. It recalls the connection between bed and terrifying wolf in the frightening admonitory tale deeply stored in girls’ memories.

In the third memorable bed scene in *Anne of Green Gables* Marilla lights a candle and sees Anne in bed, her red hair turned to “a queer dull bronzy green” (301). Anne explains. A mysterious pedlar has offered her something in a bottle, warranted to make her more attractive and appealing. Instead the liquid from the bottle has produced an embarrassing, distressing result. Marilla views the “grotesque” mess, and offers advice: Wash it. After a week has gone by, more advice: Cut it off. Anne looks in her mirror, calm with despair. But before long a new crop of soft curls will appear, to be tied with a jaunty ribbon.

Most modern books for girls would offer a more direct approach to topics like nubility, menstruation, and intercourse. Montgomery’s

reticence and her obliquity contrast sharply with the direct treatment of once tabooed topics by writers such as Judy Blume. Children certainly ask for and enjoy the new explicit books like Judy Blume's, but many adults find them without resonance. Michele Landsberg's *Guide to Children's Books* (1985) clarifies some of this aversion; Landsberg suggests that the still-protective self-consciousness of girls seems better imaged in a book which touches sensibilities indirectly. Many modern books for girls by Canadian authors show such obliquity. Joan Clark's *The Moons of Madeleine* (1987), for example, is a recent fantasy about the onset of maturing. It conveys its message subtly through symbols such as the moon, the mirror, bicycles, and Indian masks. An earlier fantasy, Ruth Nichols's *The Marrow of the World* (1972), similarly uses boats and forests and underground labyrinths to create obliquely a mythic feeling of mystery and significance. The tone of high romance as well as the specific range of symbols recalls qualities in Montgomery. None of the modern Canadians, however, add the touch of humour which in Judy Blume defuses some of the experiences directly exposed, and in Montgomery decants some of the tension subtly cupped in images of swelling and flux.

Anne of Green Gables can be delicately half-understood by girls feeling the faint first stirrings of sexuality. Its implications are clear enough to be perceptible and amusing for post-adolescents, both male and female. Nevertheless, as American critic Carol Gay points out, Anne, living in a "woman's world," displays an imaginative way of looking at things that is distinctively "feminine" ("Kindred Spirits All" 12). Gay bases this conclusion on definitions offered by French feminist critics.

Many feminists, however, take umbrage at what they consider the belittling use to which Montgomery puts her powerfully female symbolism. They see in this book a too-heavy emphasis on Anne's romantic relationship to Gilbert, and too many recurring allusions to the trappings of marriage — white dresses, bridal veils, and blossoms. To these critics, such emphases turn the novel into a typical courtship story where marriage beckons as a glorious climax. Feminist critics like Rachel DuPlessis document the fact that most romancers do not succeed in "writing beyond the ending," moving out of the cliché emphasis on boy-meets-girl. A novel as romantic in the traditional sense as *Anne of Green Gables*, say the feminists,

reinforces in girls the sense that the mating game is all-important.

Of course the mating game *is* important — the continuance of the species depends on it. The problematic point is that the moves in the game, the traditional ceremonies of courtship and the forms of the wedding ceremony, have come to reinforce the expectation of submissive womanhood. In *Anne of Green Gables*, however, feminist critics notwithstanding, Anne's feelings about Gilbert are far from maidenly desire for a masterful mate, and Montgomery's allusions to bridal raiment and wedding veils teeter between romantic and ironic tones. Montgomery's treatment of romance and courtship is another instance of the ambiguity of her attitudes toward the status of women.

The allusions begin when Mrs. Lynde, surveying Avonlea, notes "a bridal flush of pinky-white bloom" (2). Typically, the next sentence tucks in an ironic reference to two men toiling in the nearby red fields, one hen-pecked, the other work-driven. The romantic implications of pale spring blossoms carry forward into our first glimpse into the mind of Anne, at the Bright River station. Her first speech presents a dream of sleeping "in a wild cherry-tree all white with bloom in the moonshine" (17) — a dream that she has concocted, typically — to counter fear and uneasiness in an unknown world. Accepted, temporarily, by Matthew, she moves toward that world. Her next two speeches concern, first, her own plain appearance, and second, the bridal beauty of a wild fruit-tree in white and lacy blossom. Her conclusion synthesizes the thought of female beauty and of marriage: "I'm so homely nobody will ever want to marry me. . . . But I do hope that some day I shall have a white dress" (19).

On her first morning at Green Gables, Anne sees outside her window a tree thickset with blossoms. She names this "radiantly lovely" tree "Snow Queen" — after the regal but icy bride in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. Marilla responds, "It blooms great, but the fruit don't amount to much" (45).

The climactic chapter in which Anne first confronts Gilbert begins with Anne and Diana walking through romantic Lover's Lane, talking about female beauty, and about boys' and girls' interest in each other. It proceeds past unromantic graffiti on the school porch walls and into the school where boys and girls are divided in studies, in games, in seating, and ordinarily by interests. It sidles toward its central action when Gilbert teasingly pulls the pretty blond braids

of Ruby Gillis. Then comes the first dramatic thwack of the slate when he turns his attention to Anne's red hair. This overt drama is succeeded by an ominously silent second one. Anne, wearing a wreath of rice lilies, is assigned by the teacher to a place beside her tormentor. This second climax ends as Anne grinds Gilbert's pink candy heart into the floor. Anne brings the chapter toward its ending with a burst of tears. She weeps hysterically over the future possibility of Diana "dressed in snowy garments, with a veil, and looking as beautiful and regal as a queen" (167). The phrase carries a complex knot of suggestions; the recall of the Snow Queen clarifies the connection between Anne's hysterical outburst and the frightening suggestions of courtship implied in the scenes she has just endured with Gilbert; the attribution of the threatening bridal veil not to herself but to Diana is a subtle instance of repression of a frightening thought. The chapter ends, as so many do, with an exchange between Anne and Marilla. This time Marilla bursts into a peal of laughter at Anne's imagination. "If you must borrow trouble," she says, "for pity's sake borrow it handier home" (167). The catch phrase reduces the final tension, but reminds us how close to home the terror of the bridal veil is.

The next major confrontation with Gilbert and the possibility of romance comes in the "Unfortunate Lily Maid" chapter. The actions here are performed slowly and ceremonially. The four girls readying the "maid" who is dying for love transform the commonplace into theatrical grandeur — black pall, golden coverlet — pulling into ordinary life the elevation of literary association. Tennyson's maid of course carries a lily; the maid of Avonlea must make do with a blue iris. But the solemnity of the girls carries over into the ensuing action. The barge, gashed by an embedded stake, acquires ritual meaning, connected with the rite of passage from girlhood into puberty. This is a threatening event, and a lonely one, for Anne has been abandoned by her handmaids. She is saved by clinging to a rough pile, a pole that suspends the bridge over the reflecting pond. She must of course be rescued from her predicament by a boy. We expect a reconciliation to ensue, but Anne turns up a "steep, ferny little path" (315) alone. A choice again and a rejection again of the proffered heart. In retrospect, Anne views the humiliating end of the ritual as a cure for romancing. But Matthew, provider of puff sleeves, counsels, "Don't give up all your romance, Anne" (318).

Much later in the novel, Diana will help Anne dress in white in a scene suggestive of a bridal day. Anne, however, is preparing not for a wedding but for a concert, a scene in which her antagonism to Gilbert is most intense. At White Sands hotel, Anne tucks Diana's little white house rose into her hair (parted to make her look "like a Madonna"), ties Matthew's gift of pearls around her throat — then finds herself stage struck. Gilbert's smiling presence at White Sands affects her "like an electric shock" (378). She is stung into a fine performance. After her success at the concert, she drives home with the other girls, by a sea which is guarded by "darkling cliffs" like "grim giants" (380).

The final paragraphs in the novel recall earlier passages, and add hints of barrenness and insecurity. Anne looks out not at cherry blossoms but at cherry boughs; she sees pointed firs not on the hills but in the hollow; not moonshine but the light of twinkling stars; not wedding tapers but Diana's light gleaming "through the old gap" (429). Anne has changed, is less voluble, less eloquent; she ends with a pat quotation (" 'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world,' ") rather than with one of those passionate outbursts in which she used to assert not God's will, or the world's, but her own.

The romantic implications of the wedding clichés are thus always countermanded by a nervous revulsion. Readers of these scenes may not be surprised to read in L.M. Montgomery's journal of the hysteria which she experienced on her own wedding day:

I had been feeling contented all the morning. I had gone through the ceremony and the congratulations unflustered and unregretful. And now, when it was all over and I found myself sitting there by my husband's side — *my husband!* — I felt a horrible inrush of *rebellion and despair*. I *wanted to be free!* I felt like a prisoner — a hopeless prisoner. Something in me — something wild and free and untamed — something that Ewan had not tamed — could never tame — something that did not acknowledge him as master — rose up in one frantic protest against the fetters which bound me. At that moment if I could have torn the wedding ring from my finger and so freed myself I would have done it! But it was too late — and the realization that it was too late fell over me like a black cloud of wretchedness. I sat at that gay bridal feast, in my white veil and orange blossoms, beside

the man I had married — and I was as unhappy as I had ever been in my life. (*Selected Journals*, II: 68)

Such a complex tumult of emotions is related to the complex images in *Anne of Green Gables*, of veils and snow maidens, blossoms and fruit, flush and pallor. We cannot dismiss a novel by this woman as a facile example of girlish romancing.

The ambiguous currents of feeling released in the allusions to Gilbert and to the accoutrements of romance are related to Montgomery's own tension when on her wedding day she faced changing her name from Montgomery to Macdonald.

It always gives me an odd feeling to be called 'Mrs. Macdonald'. I have to remind myself mentally that it is I that is being spoken to. Somehow I felt sorry at giving up my old name — the name of my father, the name linked with the experiences of a lifetime, the name under which I have won my success. To be sure, I shall always keep it in literature. But there will be a difference. (*Selected Journals* II: 67)

Anne, unlike L.M. Montgomery, accepts the change in her life without any "inrush of protest." She accepts her "fetters" in a dimmed scene. Matthew has died and Marilla has mellowed, and Gilbert has made the imperious fatalistic pronouncement, "You've thwarted destiny long enough" (428). Anne is turning her back on college, on public performance, on the blossoming of her imagination. She is accepting the traditional roles of women: comforting Marilla, feeling grateful to Gilbert who has stepped in and arranged her future as teacher in Avonlea, nurturing the little children who will be in her classes, maintaining a deep-rooted memory of Matthew and the past.

Anne's story is not dominated by romance. Instead, her obsessive drive is a longing for a home. She seeks her identity not by finding a mate but by becoming part of a place. This is a story of how much a girl gives up in order to find the encircling security and comfort of home. Coming into the lives of Matthew and Marilla opens for Anne the sense of warmth and belonging traditionally to be unlocked by the move into a marriage. All the hints that the story will tilt toward romance are false leads. The book works its own way past the clichés

of courtship stories. And the subtleties of that working make the book very satisfying to women readers in particular. It substitutes for an emphasis on courtship many deep feelings — love of older people, response to nature, ambition for excellence, response to books — as sources of high emotional, moral, and spiritual intensities; and it grinds the pink candy of ordinary boy-and-girl romance under its heel.

Nevertheless the ending has brought specific criticism from feminists. The visionary gleam of glory for Anne disappears with Matthew's death and Marilla's weakness. Anne gives up a chance to develop her own potential, to satisfy her literary and intellectual ambitions. She appears to many liberated women as a bad model for girls in this submission and self-denial.

The submissive conclusion rose in part from L.M. Montgomery's own experience. She was in a position to think rather bitterly about the different expectations society placed on girls and on boys. Most of the boys she had known in her school days had left the island, going west, as her own father had done, to further their fortunes. Many of the girls had married, some after a year or so in teaching. She herself had been called home from abortive efforts at professional life, as a teacher and as a newspaper woman, because her grandmother needed her help.

She was conscious of alternatives to such submission to gender-based roles. Two of her favourite books at the time of writing *Anne of Green Gables* were Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and Countess von Arnim's *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (1898), both written in a spirit of rebellion (*Selected Journals* 1: 248; 307). On one of her many rereadings of *The Story of an African Farm*, she characterized it as "speculative, analytical, rather pessimistic, iconoclastic, daring — and *very* unconventional . . . like a tonic, bitter and bracing" (*Selected Journals* 1: 248). This novel has become a favourite of modern feminists, as one of many books about women who made gestures against the passive roles forced upon them.

Anne in fact is not forced into passivity. Yet her choice, her determination to turn back from the dream of Redmond University and the Avery scholarship is enforced by subtle pressures. She has been raised and indoctrinated in a patriarchal community, and her choice is determined by her socialization. In this sense the ending can be justified for its realism. A girl of Anne's age, in Anne's time and

society, would be unlikely to pit herself against the conditioning of a lifetime.

Her choice, however, is not absolute. Immediately after making the harder choice, of commuting to White Sands, Anne sees an easier alternative opening up: she will be bound only to Avonlea — courtesy of Gilbert. Notably he, too, is making a sacrificial choice, putting off his dream of college. Both young people end on a note of hope. The story is open-ended: Anne contemplates a bend in the road and affirms the possibility of a change around that bend.

A dim and ambiguous ending for Anne. Nevertheless feminists can thank her and her creator for stirrings of ambition, surges of self-respect, enticements into articulation which have had a deeply liberating effect on generations of twentieth-century girls.

The doubts and resistances and yearnings for self-expression so whimsically displayed in Anne have also charmed male readers and made them conscious of the storms that assault girls and women. Of course men have to choose between freedom and responsibility too. Indeed a major part of the counterpoint feeling in the reader of the last chapter catches a traditionally male sense of entrapment, a dread of accepting the gables of home, a desire for "Redmond," the red world of free and passionate life. Finally we recognize in *Anne of Green Gables* not just a study of adolescent girlhood, not just a "girl's book," but a representation of human growth and contrariety common to both sexes, and puzzling and disturbing to both.

In discussing *Anne of Green Gables*, Temma Berg emphasizes the bisexual quality of the irrational unconscious, both in the writer and the reader. Berg adds, "Although in many ways *Anne of Green Gables* seems to be setting up separate worlds for men and women and finding the worlds of women and girls more interesting than the worlds of men and boys, . . . the dialectic works itself out in each individual, not between individuals. Men and women alike have to wrestle with contrary impulses" ("*Anne of Green Gables: A Girl's Reading*" 127).

As regards both men and women, Montgomery's work seems to me to fit one of Professor Frye's comments on all good literature: "It's two dreams, a wish-fulfilment dream and an anxiety dream, that are focused together, like a pair of glasses, and become a fully conscious vision" (*Educated Imagination* 43). As a woman writer, looking through those gold-rimmed double circles of desire and

dread, L.M. Montgomery caught and passed on to her readers a unique glimpse of the gender-biased lives of women and men.

CINDERELLA IN CANADA

The oldest kind of fiction, the traditional fairy tale, polarizes desire and dread. A reader may say of the penultimate section of *Anne of Green Gables*, "It's like a fairy tale," remembering J.M. Barrie's Never Land, where everyone has fun and friends and freedom. But fairy tales, especially the traditional ones, are full of dreadful noises: "I'll huff and I'll puff . . ." or "I'm a Troll — and I'm going to eat you for supper!"

One of the subtle interests of *Anne of Green Gables* is that it does work in the same way as a fairy tale of that traditional kind. It reveals universal anxieties, guilt, wonder, and hopes. Students of the morphology of folk tales would recognize in it bits of many traditional motifs. There is a magic talisman dropped deep into the water, in Anne's story of the amethyst brooch, told in response to a thundering question that sounds like "Who's been eating *my* porridge?" There's a sleeping beauty who keeps her eyes shut for a long time before the prince comes — and he comes after she has touched a thorny little rose. Like every fairy tale prince, he brings the old reassurance of life starting again after death, real or apparent. And there may be a troll under the bridge.

One central fairy tale underlies *Anne of Green Gables*. (It's not "The Ugly Duckling," although in an article in the *Dalhousie Review* [1976] Lesley Willis did an interesting job of comparing it to that classic.) Anne is not transformed into anything basically different from what she was at the start — a girl with a kind heart and a willing hand, placed in unhappy circumstances. She does not emerge miraculously to fly off to another world. At the end she is still Anne of Green Gables, though now properly recognized as the queenly being she has always been. As a variant of "Cinderella," the novel works as all good children's stories do, facing deprivation and fear, and then bringing recovery and consolation.

Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook (1982) suggests some of the ways this story has interested anthropologists, classicists, social historians, feminists, Marxists, structuralists, and psychiatrists. The *Casebook*

editor is right when he calls the old tale "endearing and enduring" (xvii).

Noticeably, no Canadian folklorist is represented in the *Cinderella Casebook*, and no Canadian variant stands beside such examples as "A Muslim Women's Ritual" or "A Javanese Cinderella Tale." Canadian critics have been interested in the way retellings of other fairy tales reveal something of our national interests. Perry Nodelman, for instance, in "'Little Red Riding Hood' as a Canadian Fairy Tale," noted anomalies between old world tales and our new land; his point was intensified by Agnes Grant, in "A Canadian Fairy Tale, What Is It?" showing the way Metis students react to the wolf, the grandmother, and the basket of goodies. In "The Case of Cinderella," however, Constance Hieatt argues that Canadian students do not in fact know old world fairy tales except in versions "all too revealing of current North American cultural attitudes" 95). "Perhaps," she says, "there is no really striking Canadian Cinderella." I would argue that *Anne of Green Gables* is a striking variant of the old tale, and that it is particularly striking in the way it weaves personal and national concerns into the traditional motifs.

The structural analyst Claude Lévi-Strauss sees each version of every traditional story as "an intersection between preexisting versions of the story and modifications induced by changes in the social or environmental infrastructure" (*Casebook* 251). The particular ensemble of elements, he says, will reveal the ideology of the teller's world, its attitudes to class, age, and sex roles, and its conception of power relations. What happens when the old tale of Cinderella comes to a Canadian intersection?

Like the Walt Disney version of "Cinderella," and the modern television producers' versions of *Anne*, Montgomery's novel reveals a good deal about its creator and about the socio-cultural context. The author works out her story of a poor little girl set to hard tasks and enduring them with an untainted heart in terms that reveal her sometimes distorting memories of her own past. She also emphasizes elements that held special force in the first decade of the twentieth century. She adds geographic and social touches that mark this as a Canadian version of the Cinderella story.

Parts of the story — discrete bits which folklorists call mythemes or morphemes — occur in many sections of the novel. The single chapter that shows Montgomery combining and reshaping virtually

all of the Cinderella mythemes is chapter 29, titled "An Epoch in Anne's Life." Anne is always adept at putting grand words to her doings: in this epoch Anne rides out of Avonlea to a Cinderella splendour. This chapter foreshadows the ending of the novel; it makes a good place to end an analysis of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Cinderella's story should begin in ashes, with Cinderella thrust into the cinders by a cruel stepmother. In the past Anne has known a time of "ashes," before coming to the Island, when she was driven and belittled by foster mothers, but even at the outset of the novel this Cinderella could speak of that bondage with sympathy for the women who set her to hard tasks. Now, near Green Gables, she goes about her duties happily dreaming. Chapter 29 begins with Anne bringing the cows home from the back pasture — a local variant of servitude.

To psychological interpreters "living in the ashes" images the sense of being unattractive and worthless, feelings postulated as being normal to most children. L.M. Montgomery herself had known a sense of dismissal and exploitation as a child. She would use these feelings of being small and unjustly reprimanded and ridiculed in later books in the *Emily* series but in *Anne* she presents a cheerful girl who has survived an "ashes" phase. I believe a contemporary shift in attitudes to childhood is apparent here, offsetting both personal experience and the Cinderella paradigm.

Turn of the century attitudes to childhood have been summarized by Philippe Aries in *Centuries of Childhood* (1962). Montessori's application of Froebel's notions about little children's growth in a "kinder garten" echoed a change already notable in literature. Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) had heralded a shift from didacticism to a mood of play.

Canadian writers participated in the imaginative shift of child life from "cinders" to "gardens." When E.W. Thomson became editor of *Youth's Companion*, one of the most influential purveyors of pleasurable reading for children, Canadian writers moved easily into his orbit. Montgomery joined C.G.D. Roberts, E.T. Seton, Marshall Saunders, and others as a professional engaged with children's entertainment. Living in a largely agricultural economy where children's chores contributed essentially to farm management, Canadians found it easy to emphasize the worth rather than the insignificance of childhood. In her 1908 story, Montgomery is typical of her time

in presenting the child not with condescension or irony. Few ashes for this Canadian Cinderella.

The setting emphasizes not cinders but fire. It is autumn, generally a grey time of dying life. But in Canada, especially in the Maritimes, fall flames into beautiful colour, "a ruby sunset light" (319). Chapter 29 begins with an allusion to the "dark impenetrable wood" in Walter Scott's *Marmion*. But Montgomery views the forest in a new Canadian way. She knows the "crimson forest" and the "sumachs on the hill" of Wilfred Campbell's "Indian Summer" (1889). She has shared the exultation of Bliss Carman: "The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry / Of bugles going by," Carman had written in "A Vagabond Song" (1889). She had read Isabella Valancy Crawford's version of "the dark impenetrable wood" in "Malcolm's Katie" (1884), where a Canadian autumn "struck maple, and struck sumach . . . / Till round the forest flashed a belt of flame." Anne as Canadian Cinderella will ride away in "early red sunlight" through woods where maples "were beginning to hang out scarlet banners" (323).

Into this opening scene comes Diana, as a herald with a ritual riddle. "Guess. You can have three guesses," she says, with linguistic realism that catches a Canadian cadence — continued in Anne's answer, "I can't think what it can be . . . unless it's that Moody Spurgeon Macpherson saw you home from prayer meeting last night. Did he?" (320). The packing-in of localisms, typical of the times, is demonstrated in regional stories by Canadian writers known to Montgomery, such as E. W. Thomson.

The "fairy godmother" who issues the invitation and organizes the trip is Miss Josephine Barry. (She has earlier sent Anne a pair of shining slippers.) Miss Barry's magic wand consists of money — quite simply she can afford to take the young to an Exhibition, a concert, and a restaurant.

It looks as though Marilla may play the part of forbidding stepmother. At the outset of the novel Anne seems to have had not one but two stepmothers, Mrs. Lynde and Marilla. One keeps her hard at work, the other twits her about her unattractiveness. Montgomery converts both into kindness. In this epoch, Marilla, mellowed, sends Anne off to happiness.

Some critics who study the hold that folk tales, fairy stories, and myths exercise over our imaginations suggest that the conflicts in these stories externalize our psychological and social conflicts. The

post-Freudian critic, Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1975), postulates that the stepmother in a fairy tale represents our hidden conception of parental power, the authoritative force that says no to youthful aspirations and keeps the child powerless (66–73). Submitting to the enchantment of story lets us sublimate and release the feeling of being powerless. Other critics — Jack Zipes in *Breaking the Magic Spell*, again for instance — view the fairy tale stepmothers as representing extra-familial powers, the political and social repressors of the lower classes, the serfs, or the disenfranchised.

In Anne's story Marilla represents both parental power and employer/supervisor power. She exercises both with increasing benignity. This kindly handling of the stepmother figure is particularly impressive, because in Montgomery's own life there was a real stepmother. Toward the youngish woman whom her father married, Maud Montgomery harboured feelings of intense resentment and bitterness. Yet, transmuting personal antagonism into a conventional fairy tale pattern, she is released from that acrimony; working within the conventional frame serves her as a way of sublimating and rising above hostility.

"Stepmother" into "godmother": the transformation reveals an optimistic Canadian hope of finding kindly leadership, an essential optimism about the democratic process. In Canada, a triply colonized country, one would expect a resentment of political and cultural "stepmothers." Margaret Atwood in *Survival* popularized the idea that Canadian literature is crowded with harsh older women, "stone angels" who repress young life. Once again, it is significant in a socio-political sense that by humour Montgomery tones down resentment into a sympathetic presentation of the older people who dominate Anne's life.

Specifically Marilla, not Miss Barry, provides fine clothes for Anne's excursion. Not a ball gown of course, but a fashionable navy blue dress, and — more obviously Canadian autumn wear — a new coat and a velvet cap. Cinderella's desire for fine clothes was shared by Montgomery. All her life long she remembered with resentment the fact that her grandparents, sadly out of touch with current styles, did not put her in clothes that satisfied her. As an older woman, she indulged in frills, chains, feathers, and ruffles. Anne achieves a softer elegance, the *art nouveau* simplicity of early Edwardian grace. Fashion indeed spread quickly in Montgomery's day, thanks to the

circulating magazines such as the ones that bought her early stories and poems. The elaboration of the "ball gown" mytheme, that is, the detailed descriptions of Anne's clothing, reflects the contemporary Canadian availability of pretty styles. Anne, even in her remote village, can access a different appearance, a "clothing" of beauty.

Anne rides away to Charlottetown, not as a solo Cinderella defying her stepsisters, but in company with Diana, her kindred spirit. Resentment of siblings is thought by psychologists to be the source of power in the "ugly stepsisters" motif. In Cavendish, at her grandparents' home, Montgomery had no sibling rivals but she did face three families of cousins who derided her. The remembered derision surfaces in Josie Pye's taunts. In Prince Albert she was for a short time forced to look after her little half-brother and sister, children of her beloved father and the hated stepmother. She unpacks some of that remembered resentment in the flashback part of Anne's story — but turns the babies into parody and farce, an expansion into "twins three times in succession" (57). Now, nearing the climax of the book, she lets Diana share the enjoyment of the Cinderella "epoch." Sharing, friendliness, interdependence, rather than competition and derision are the Canadian values that here counter the fairy tale convention.

Next in the traditional sequence we would expect to see Cinderella at the ball. Again there are local and national qualities in the way Montgomery changes this part of the fairy tale. Anne in her moment of glory goes not to a dance but to an Exhibition, the Fall Fair at Charlottetown. Here the men compete with Gravenstein apples and pigs, the women with fancy work, paintings, butter and cheese. The girls go to horse races but do not bet; a fortune-teller prophesies a dark man and a trip over water (not unlikely guesses, in an island full of dark Celts) but no prince turns up. Montgomery gently satirizes the provincial nature of these "epochal" pleasures. Four years later, in 1912, Stephen Leacock would cast a similar mock-heroic but loving tone over the provincialism of a picnic excursion in Ontario. Montgomery presents no cataclysmic climax like the sinking of the *Mariposa Belle*. She does however provide a seriously epic moment when Anne responds to the singing of a prima donna at the Academy of Music. Anne's rhetoric is at last justified: uncommon art can indeed be released in Charlottetown, or in Orillia, or in Cavendish. The epic tone drops when Miss Barry offers a feast in the form of ice cream at a restaurant across the street.

At least this is a change from the Scottish version of Cinderella, on which Montgomery was probably reared. There "Rashie-Coatie" (Coat-of-Rushes) yearns to go not to a concert let alone a ball, but to the kirk. Although this Canadian Rashie-Coatie goes to a provincial fair rather than a church, the direction of Anne's yearnings and the nature of her achievements reflect a lingering Puritanism, or Protestantism, or Presbyterianism.

The urge to keep pleasure within the bounds of propriety and self-improvement was very strong in Montgomery's Canada. Her own growing-up dream, like Anne's, was not to go to dances or to ride in a coach but to go to college. This Canadian dream probably derives from the Scottish emphasis on education, based on John Knox's mandate, "a school in every village, a college in every town."

Meanwhile Cinderella-Anne rides home, not ignominiously, with pumpkin and mice, but in a pleasant drive by a radiant sea in the moonlight. Anne returns blithely from Charlottetown to Green Gables. In this return, she echoes a plot twist popularized by the Scottish novelists of the Kailyard school such as Ian MacLaren, S.R. Crockett, and J.M. Barrie. Equally popular Canadian novels of the time, *The Man from Glengarry* (1901) and *Glengarry School Days* (1902) by Ralph Connor, also idealized such a return. The Scottish-Canadian hero does not move away permanently to a court or a castle or the modern equivalent but returns home to the village. Montgomery's Cinderella echoes this Canadian acceptance of a limited sphere as the best promise of "quiet happiness."

The tough old versions of Cinderella end with the young girl vengefully watching her ugly stepsisters hack off their own toes, or seeing birds peck out the sisters' eyes during her own wedding feast. Montgomery's ending is something else again. As the chapter ends she sits in the warmth of the hearth fire, between the two adult powers in her life; she is happy. Politically, this final scene reflects a Canadian reality of the time. L.M. Montgomery set her novel in the period depicted in Sara Jeannette Duncan's brilliant novel *The Imperialist* (1904), which directly presents Canada's relation to Great Britain and the United States. British imperialism and American infiltration were much under discussion in Montgomery's politicized family. Anne indirectly represents moderation and the acceptance of superior power as she sits happily between two older and better established beings.

A politicized folklorist would say that because the conventional fable is incomplete, and the emancipation implicit in traditional folk tales unachieved, the story must begin again. Jack Zipes, in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, levels this criticism at the work of George Macdonald and L. Frank Baum (171). A comparable case could be made as to the limitation of a liberating potential in Montgomery's rendering.

Montgomery personally developed this reconciliatory stance through a lifetime of practice in reducing personal pressures by escaping to books. Whenever the world of living beings turned nasty (which was often in the Macneill household), she immersed herself in reading. But we can also relate the reductive ending to Canadian social and political contexts. Montgomery's repression of her familial tensions, her dissolving of them in a bath of laughter, seem to me not just a personal gift. It is also a mark of the inhibiting code of good behaviour which had so strong a hold on middle class Canadians in her day. The colonial desire to appear urbane, sophisticated, and civilized was nervously strong in this part of the new world. Anne's civility (not to call it docility) *vis-à-vis* the older people seems to reflect a Canadian ideal of behaviour. In *Bodily Harm* one of Margaret Atwood's characters mocks the "nice Canadians." Certainly in 1908, in a country that had coalesced without revolution or civil war, Canadians prided themselves on niceness, on peace. The accepting scene that ends the Cinderella chapter encapsulates an attitude of the place and the time. What else could a girl — or a nation — do?

Indeed a girl, even in that rather restrictive era, might look westward as Advena does in Duncan's *The Imperialist*. Or she could move not away from but more deeply into the heart of empire. Interestingly, Duncan, a more sophisticated writer than Montgomery, brought out in 1908, the same year as *Anne*, a novel with the title *Cousin Cinderella*. The subtitle of this book, provocative in its suggestion of successful flight away from the home village, is *A Canadian Girl in London*. Duncan herself early began and long maintained a professional career as a writer, starting in the 1880s when she published her "Saunterings" in *The Week*.

L.M. Montgomery's own experience of rolling away to maturity was a very different affair from this Cinderella story. After a teen-age experience of transcontinental travel to join (briefly) her father and stepmother, she returned to an unwelcoming Cavendish, where her

grandparents denied her a university education for lack of money — a touch of materialistic determinism which would suit a Marxist reading of the fable; and a genuine reflection of Canadian economic priorities.

The contrast between fact and fiction in this single chapter of life underlines the escapist function of fairy tales; the success of the novel implies that Montgomery had effectively sited the traditional tale in her own time and place. Another Canadian woman, Nellie McClung, produced a western-based, open-faced version of Cinderella in *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, published in the same year as *Anne of Green Gables*, 1908. McClung conveyed more frankly the traumas of a small girl in a harsh world. Montgomery's rendering, gentler than McClung's, and significantly prettier than her own life, outstripped her contemporary books in breadth and persistence of appeal.

Perhaps the Canadian best-seller brought to readers at home and in other countries then and now a welcome moderation, a conventional tamping down of yeasty changes in the lives of young people. Such moderation was coming to be seen as a Canadian trademark. "Sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship" (429) are the other ideals mentioned at the end of *Anne of Green Gables*: a Canadian catalogue of ideals very different than escaping from the cinders or ascending the throne.

As for L.M. Montgomery, when she finished writing *Anne of Green Gables* she thought she was finished with Anne. She stepped back into her own Cinderella role in Cavendish, ready to work out another five years of labour waiting for — the prince? Or the success of a bestseller? Both came. It does sound like a fairy tale; but read the journals if you want to see what happens in real life in non-fairy tale Ontario, with an exploitative American publisher and a mental patient husband. But that's another story.

As a work of art, *Anne of Green Gables* has experienced something of Cinderella's fate. Long remanded to the cinders by the academic establishment, for reasons explained in Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs*, the novel never lost its appeal. We still see traces of Montgomery's version of the fairy tale when Margaret Atwood's Cinderella rises in red-haired beauty from her mothball stage in *Lady Oracle* (1976) and begins to write novels that out-gothic the Lady Cordelia story. Or when Alice Munro's Del in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) mounts a bus and sets off, garbed in pride in her

scholastic achievements. Or when Morag makes it to Winnipeg and to college in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974). Recently, decked out in the new bright mode of a television adaptation, *Anne of Green Gables* reclaimed wide attention. Simultaneously it has gained critical *éclat*, along with other formerly marginalized books, thanks to current interests of feminists and reader response critics and narratologists. A rereading of the book itself will reveal values other than those perceived by the video audience or the new critics. The fresh charm that attracted early audiences and the period quality that has emerged with passing years justify applying to it the tag attached to the traditional Cinderella tale: *Anne of Green Gables* is indeed both "endearing and enduring."

READING AGAIN

"Read it again," says the youngest listener, as she used to do when the last Billy Goat Gruff finished his trit-trot trit-trot over the rickety rickety bridge. "I'll read it again," says the older child, shutting the book, putting off the magic cloak, and returning to the jeans and sweatshirt of ordinary life. She didn't say that when she finished *The Stone Angel*, although she was visibly moved by that reading. But both young people want to hear more of *Anne*, to hear again the narrator's voice, not talking down, but speaking out, using language for one of its primary functions, to produce a story which (as Sir Philip Sidney said long ago in his *Defence of Poesie*), "holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner."

How does the spell work? "Little do I know," to quote Marilla. But like her I mean to go on trying to find out. My "purpose firm" is to read it again, deepening my pleasure in the story's shaping, the feminist subtext, the archetypal implications about the Canadian environment. Rereading, I'll enjoy again the sense of being at a nexus of literature and life.

Let me end this reading of *Anne of Green Gables*, as I began it, with my own little story. I was in Spain last fall at an international conference on children's literature. A German scholar from Bonn cited *Anne of Green Gables* as an example of the socialization of girls through educational pressures. Everyone responded. They all knew Anne — the critic from London, the young teacher from Jerusalem,

the Swedish professor, the Texas librarian. After that session, I wandered into a department store in Salamanca in search of an adaptor plug. Among the appliances was a television set, turned on, and circled by a very mixed group of Spanish children and adults. They were watching *Anne of Green Gables*, the Canadian version, with Spanish dialogue dubbed in. The segment ended. A commercial came on. The people moved away. I don't understand Spanish, but I'm pretty sure they were saying, as I once did, "I can't wait for next time, to go on with Anne again."

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